

# THE COAT OF ARMS

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# THE ARMS OF THE CISTERCIAN ABBEYS AS ILLUSTRATED BY DOM ANSELM BAKER

## Part 2: The South West of England

PAUL A.FOX AIH, FHS

### Abstract

*Of the eight foundations considered here, five are from the county of Devon under its original borders, and one each from Dorset, Hampshire and Gloucestershire. Three of the arms which were illustrated have a reasonably strong evidential basis, having been specifically designed for their abbeys, these being the buck's head and crozier of Buckfast Abbey, the crown and crozier of Beaulieu, and the founder's arms with the addition of a crozier of Hailes. Buckland Abbey probably adopted the hart's head and crozier late in its history, but Brother Anselm was not aware of this. For the remaining four the evidence of the arms comes from seals. The seal of Dunkeswell Abbey carried only a single shield, that of its founder, making the ascription straightforward, but the remainder had seals with twin shields. These were for joint founders in the case of Newenham, for the founder and a later patron in the case of Bindon, and for the patron and a benefactor in the case of Forde. In the 1460s William Ballard, ascribed arms to the abbeys of Forde and Buckland that would have well suited a Yorkist political agenda. If these arms were imposed on the abbeys concerned, then they would presumably have been abandoned when the Tudor dynasty was established.*

**Buckfast Abbey, Devon:** *sable (another source says azure) a crozier in pale or and over all a buck's head caboshed argent.*

These pleasant canting arms were recorded by the herald William Ballard in the second half of the fifteenth century, and a little later by Garter Wrythe.<sup>1</sup> They were sketched by Leland on his travels in the sixteenth century.<sup>2</sup> This was an Anglo-Saxon foundation in the parish of Buckfastleigh, known to have been in existence in 1018. It was given by King Stephen in 1136 to the abbey of Savigny in Normandy, which joined the Cistercian order in 1148.<sup>3</sup> None of the abbey's seals was heraldic.<sup>4</sup> Nothing remained of the buildings above ground following the dissolution of the monasteries, but the site

<sup>1</sup> DBA vol 4 pp. 136,424.

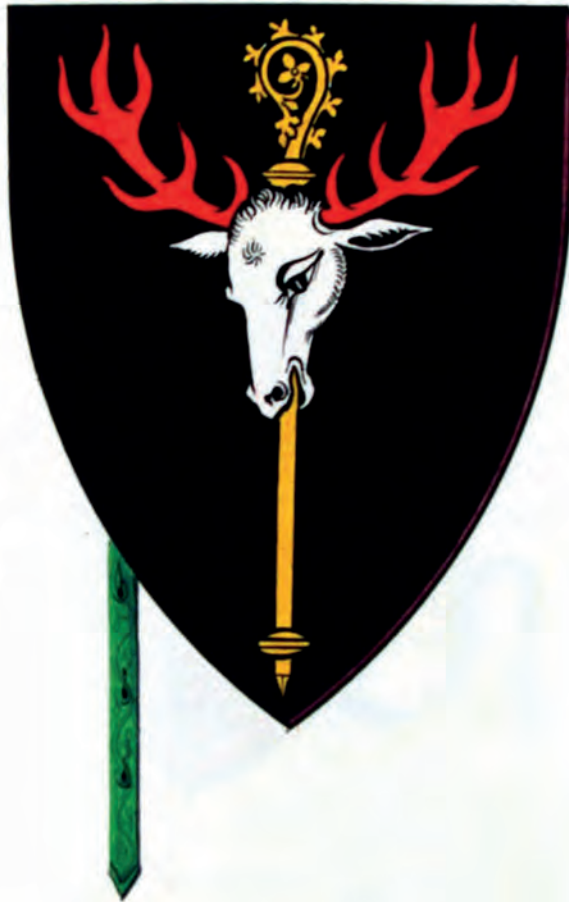
<sup>2</sup> Thomas Hearn (Ed), *Joannis Lelandi Antiquarii de rebus Britannici collectanea* 6 vols (London, 1774) vol 1 p.80.

<sup>3</sup> J. Brooking Rowe, *Contributions towards a history of the Cistercian Houses of Devon* (Plymouth, 1878), p.114.

<sup>4</sup> BM Seals 2746–7.

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Ʒ.  
Buckfastie, or Buckfastleigh Devon-  
shire.



*Figure 1:* Buckfast Abbey, Devon.



Figure 2: Forde Abbey, formerly in Devon, now in Dorset.



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was purchased in 1882 by emigré french Benedictine monks, who built a new church which was consecrated in 1932. This second foundation has adopted the buck's head and crozier as a logo. In Brother Anselm's drawing he has coloured the buck's attires red, in confusion with the Augustinian abbey of Hartland in Devon, another Anglo-Saxon foundation. The arms of Hartland were *argent a crozier in pale or, and over all a hart's head caboshed sable* (or azure), *attires gules*.<sup>5</sup>

**Forde Abbey, Dorset:** two arms: *Or three torteaux and a label of three points azure* (for **Courtenay**) and *vair* (for **Beauchamp of Hatch**).

The source of the second arms is the fifteenth-century Ballard's Book.<sup>6</sup> Both arms occur together as two shields on one of the abbey seals (**Figure 3**), but a second seal with a different combination of arms was described by Rowe.<sup>7</sup> This has shields for Courtenay plus a lion rampant, presumed to be *Or a lion rampant azure* for Redvers. Unfortunately neither seal is precisely datable, and neither is present in the published British Museum catalogue. Oliver wrongly blazoned the vair arms as *barry of six vairy and gules*, a strange error repeated by subsequent historians, which explains why Brother Anselm painted *vairy argent and gules*.<sup>8</sup> To further complicate matters, the last abbot, Thomas Chard, is known to have used the device of a hart's head and crozier, doubtless inspired by the very similar arms of Buckfast and Hartland Abbeys. The ford on the rive Axe where the abbey was built was originally known as Hart Bath.<sup>9</sup>

Forde was situated in Devon until a boundary change in 1842. The abbey was founded with monks who came from the first Cistercian house in England at Waverley in Surrey. They were first settled in Devon in 1136 by Richard (d.1137), son of the most powerful man in Devon during his day, Baldwin the sheriff (d.1095) baron of Okehampton, son of Gilbert, count of Brionne, and brother of Richard de Clare.<sup>10</sup> The first location proved unsatisfactory and Richard's sister Adelicia 'the sheriff' (d.1142) moved the monks to Forde. The heiress of the great Devon barony of Okehampton, Hawise de Courcy (d.1219) was the next significant supporter of the abbey, and was married to Reginald de Courtenay (d.1190), ancestor of the earls of Devon.<sup>11</sup> Forde became an important burial place of the Courtenays. The absence of any device for the original founders is not too surprising given the embryonic state of heraldry in that period. Checky arms were later attributed to the Brionne dynasty.<sup>12</sup> The Courtenays were the patrons of the abbey, hence the presence of their arms on both seals.

On the surviving abbey tower is the lion rampant of Redvers (*or a lion rampant azure*, later adopted by the family of Percy, following the extinction of Redvers), Robert son of Reginald de Courtenay having married Mary de Redvers, daughter of William

<sup>5</sup> As recorded by Ballard, see DBA vol 4 p.424.

<sup>6</sup> DBA vol 4 p.449.

<sup>7</sup> Rowe p.191.

<sup>8</sup> George Oliver, *Monasticon Dioecesis Exoniensis* (Exeter, 1846) p.341.

<sup>9</sup> Sidney Heath, *The story of Ford Abbey* (London, 1911) p.27.

<sup>10</sup> Katherine Keats-Rohan, *Domesday people, a prosopography of persons occurring in English documents 1066–1166, vol 1: Domesday Book* (Woodbridge, 2002) p.162.

<sup>11</sup> Ivor J Sanders, *English baronies: a study of their origin and descent 1086–1327* (Oxford, 1960) pp.69–70.

<sup>12</sup> Heath pp.61–2



*Figure 3:* Seal of Forde Abbey by kind permission of the Society of Antiquaries of London, Museum drawer B7.



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Figure 4: Abbot Chard's personal emblems at Forde drawn by Sidney Heath.

de Redvers (d.1217), earl of Devon. Heath gives a perplexing account of the other arms on the tower, and what he recorded as *barry checky and plain* was perhaps originally intended to represent the *barry vairy and plain* which Oliver wrongly ascribed to the abbey. *Barry vair and gules* was borne by the family of Courcy.<sup>13</sup> The Beauchamp family of Somerset with their *vair* arms were another baronial family of great importance. John Beauchamp lord of Hatch sealed the Barons' Letter to the Pope in 1301.<sup>14</sup> The Beauchamps of Hache donated two manors in Dorset to the abbey some time before 1337 when the abbot gave homage for them.<sup>15</sup> One of the abbey seals likely belongs to this period. The donation was likely made in 1336 when it is certain that John Lord Beauchamp of Hatch

<sup>13</sup> DBA vol 1 p.92.

<sup>14</sup> DBA vol 4 p.449.

<sup>15</sup> *Eighth Report of the Deputy-Keeper of the Public Records* (London, 1846) p.149.

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confirmed some small gifts made to the abbey by his great grandfather in the middle of the previous century.<sup>16</sup>

The presence of the arms of important abbey patrons and donors on the seals of an abbey cannot necessarily be taken to mean that these should be classed as the arms of the foundation, even if in some cases that was true. The contention of Rowe that the arms of Ford were the hart's head and crozier, matching the arms of Buckfast Abbey, is perhaps correct. A stone carving with this device (**Figure 4**) survives from the time of Abbot Chard, whose personal signet (as was used in 1524 to seal his letter to Cardinal Wolsey) comprised the hart's head only.<sup>17</sup> It is noteworthy that William Ballard considered the abbey's arms to be those of Beauchamp of Hatch<sup>18</sup> A factor which must be taken into consideration is that the arms used by abbeys tended to change with time as their patrons came and went.

**Bindon Abbey, Dorset:** *paly of eight or and gules* (for **Provence**) and *Or a cross engrailed sable* (for **Mohun of Dunster**).

Thomas Tanner in his *Notitia Monastica*, stated: 'Bindon Abbey, as I am informed, bore the arms of the family of Mohun'; while Edmondson in his additions to the coats of arms of abbeys, listed the paly coat.<sup>19</sup> Brother Anselm unaccountably rendered the latter as *Or four bars gules*. The abbey was re-founded in 1172 with monks from Forde Abbey by Roger de Newburgh and his wife Maud, having originally been established by Maud's grandfather, William of Glastonbury.<sup>20</sup> Roger was the grandson of Henry de Beaumont, alias Henry de Newburgh, earl of Warwick, who died during the reign of King Stephen, and has no recorded arms. The later Newburgh earls of Warwick bore *checky azure and or, a bend ermine* (alternatively, *a chevron ermine*).

The cadet of the Newburghs established by Roger in Dorset later bore the arms *bendy of six or and azure a border engrailed gules*, but the first record of this coat is c. 1400 in Fenwick's Roll, in which the name has been lost.<sup>21</sup> The first named member of the family who certainly bore the arms was Sir Roger de Newborough of East Lullworth (d.1514), although there is a *bendy* seal for his ancestor John de Newborough dating 1358 in which the border is absent.<sup>22</sup> The arms *bendy or and azure* belonged from an early period to the family of Montfort, and is distinctly plausible that Newburgh adopted these prestigious arms to denote their descent in the female line following a marriage alliance, adding the border for difference.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Steven Hobbs (Ed), *The Cartulary of Forde Abbey*, Somerset Record Soc (Taunton, 1998) nos 49–51.

<sup>17</sup> Oliver, op cit, 2nd Supplement p.31.

<sup>18</sup> DBA vol 4 pp 136, 424, 449.

<sup>19</sup> Thomas Tanner, *Notitia Monastica* (London, 1744) preface p.xxx; Joseph Edmondson, *A Complete body of heraldry*, 2 vols (London 1780), vol 2 appendices.

<sup>20</sup> VCH Dorset vol 2 pp.82–6.

<sup>21</sup> DBA vol 2 p.121.

<sup>22</sup> DBA vol 2 pp.121,127; John Hutchins, *The history and antiquities of the county of Dorset*, 3rd ed William Shipp and James Hodson (Eds) 4 vols (Westminster 1861–70), vol 1 p.368, with a pedigree of the family on p.366. Borders were sometimes omitted from arms on medieval seals, but an alternative explanation might be that a colour change was originally used for difference instead of a border.

<sup>23</sup> DBA vol 2 pp.126–7.



Figure 5: Bindon Abbey, Dorset.

xi.

Dunkeswell, Devonshire



Founded by William Būmere, a. d.  
mccī, in honour of our Lady.

Figure 6: Dunkeswell Abbey, Devon.



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The family of Mohun were not benefactors of Bindon Abbey, and Hutchins was perplexed that Bishop Tanner had ascribed the arms of the family to the abbey.<sup>24</sup> It might, however, be significant that Roger de Newburgh was a feudal tenant of Mohun of Dunster in 1166, and might have adopted a version of their arms as a form of feudal cadency.<sup>25</sup> In 1271, long before the Newburgh family is known to have adopted the bendy shield, Henry de Newburgh granted license for the abbot of Bindon to chose a new patron, and he selected Henry III's wife, Queen Eleanor of Provence, who bore the arms *paly or and gules*. Queen Eleanor made a generous benefaction to the abbey.<sup>26</sup>

The only surviving impression of the abbey's seal, dating to the fourteenth century, has two obliterated shields that might otherwise have resolved some of the mystery connected with the arms of Bindon and Newburgh.<sup>27</sup>

### **Dunkeswell Abbey, Devon:** *gules two bends wavy or* (for **Brewer**).

The source is the fifteenth-century abbey seal with the known arms of the founder. There was a second shield on the seal which is wanting in the surviving impression. Birch commented that these arms were 'derived' from those of the founder, which is perhaps what led Brother Anselm to make the lower bend argent, for which there is no authority.<sup>28</sup> Dunkeswell was founded in 1201 as a daughter of Forde Abbey by William de Brewer (d.1227) who purchased the manor in 1199. His three other religious foundations were a Premonstratensian abbey at Torre, an Augustinian priory at Mottisfont, and a hospital at Bridgwater, but he chose to be buried at Dunkeswell.<sup>29</sup> William's wife Beatrice de Valle was said to have been a former concubine of Reginald, earl of Cornwall. She bore him two sons and five daughters, but the sons both died without issue.<sup>30</sup> Reginald de Mohun was William's ward, and married his daughter and coheir Alice de Brewer. Brewer's cousin and namesake was bishop of Exeter from 1224 to 1244. His episcopal seal was non heraldic.

### **Beaulieu Abbey, Hampshire:** *argent a crozier in pale enfiled with a regnal crown gules in border sable billetty argent*.

The source is Tanner, in which the tinctures of the crown and crozier are unclear.<sup>31</sup> Garter Wrythe gave the field as gules, the crown and crozier Or, and placed bezants rather than billets on the border.<sup>32</sup> The fifteenth-century abbey seal (**Figure 7**) has a shield

<sup>24</sup> Hutchins vol 1 p.356.

<sup>25</sup> Katherine Keats-Rohan, *Domesday descendants, a prosopography of persons occurring in English documents 1066–1166*, vol 2: *Pipe Rolls to Cartae Baronum* (Woodbridge, 1999) p.615.

<sup>26</sup> Hutchins, op cit vol 1 pp.349–50.

<sup>27</sup> BM Seals 2641.

<sup>28</sup> BM Seals 3078; DBA vol 2 p.110.

<sup>29</sup> Sir H.C. Maxwell-Lyte, *A history of Dunster and of the families of Mohun and Luttrell*, 2 vols (London 1909) vol 1 p.20.

<sup>30</sup> William Dugdale, *The Baronage of England* (2 vols London 1675–76) vol 1 p.700; Pedigree in George Baker, *The history and antiquities of the county of Northampton*, 2 vols (London 1822–41), vol 2 p.239.

<sup>31</sup> Thomas Tanner, *Notitia Monastica*, 2nd Ed by James Nasmith (Cambridge, 1787) no lvii.

<sup>32</sup> Steven Ashley (Ed), *At the roots of heraldry: Collected papers of John Archibald Goodall*, Harl Soc (London, 2018) p.83. His source WK is Wrythe's Book.





*Figure 7: Seal of Beaulieu Abbey by kind permission of the Society of Antiquaries of London, Museum drawer B1.*

in base showing a crozier enfiled by a crown, but without the border.<sup>33</sup> Beaulieu was a royal foundation, founded by King John, who in 1205 brought over monks from Cîteaux itself, the mother abbey of the Cistercian order. Beaulieu was not completed until 1246, when a grand dedication ceremony took place, attended by Henry III and Queen Eleanor of Provence, by the king's brother Richard, Earl of Cornwall, and by the crown prince Edward, who unfortunately became seriously ill during the festivities. Isabel of Gloucester, the wife of the earl of Cornwall, had already been buried at the abbey before the high altar, in 1239. Attendance at the dedication prompted her husband to found his own abbey at Hailes which was colonised from Beaulieu, and not long afterwards the Beaulieu monks set up a second dependency at Newenham in Devon. In 1539 the abbey was granted to Thomas Wriothesley (d.1550), later K.G. and first earl of Southampton.

<sup>33</sup> BM Seals 2621.

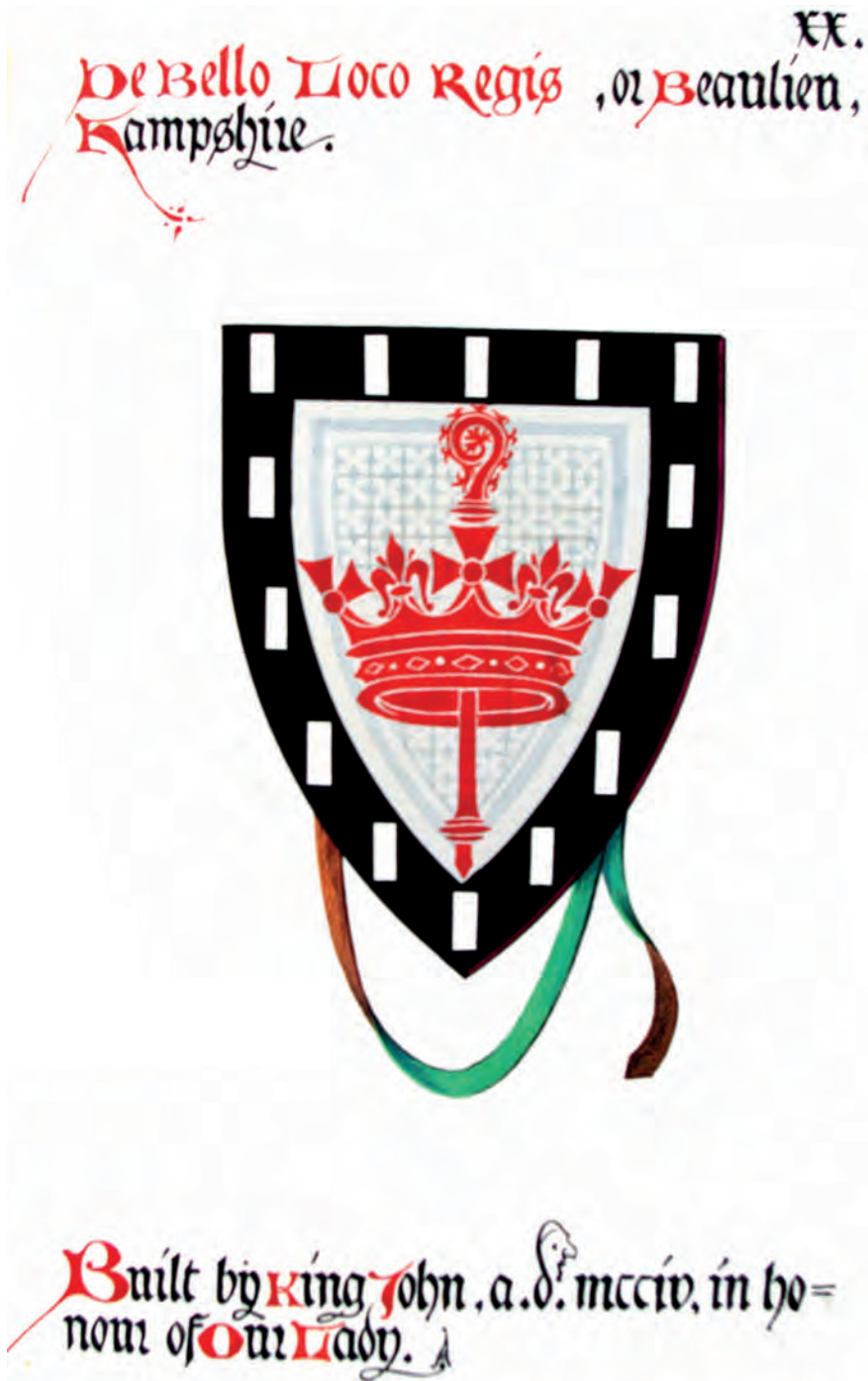


Figure 8: Beaulieu Abbey, Hampshire.



Figure 9: Hailes Abbey, Gloucestershire.

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He was descended from John Wrythe, Garter King of Arms (d. 1504). The abbey church was demolished, but the beautiful refectory was converted into a parish church.

**Hailes Abbey, Gloucestershire;** *argent a crozier in bend surmounted by a lion rampant gules in border sable bezanty.*

The source is Garter Wriothesley, published by Tanner.<sup>34</sup> These are the arms of the founder Richard Plantagenet (d.1272), earl of Cornwall with a crozier added. In the museum at Hailes there are floor tiles bearing the arms of the founder, but not the arms of the abbey itself, which belong to a later period. Richard was a man of great distinction who assumed the title of count of Poitou in 1225, was belted as earl of Cornwall in 1227, and crowned as king of Germany in 1257, although he never succeeded in being crowned by a pope, which would have converted his title to that of Holy Roman Emperor.<sup>35</sup> By early 1227, before he was created earl of Cornwall, he was using the arms *argent a lion rampant gules crowned Or within a border sable bezanty*.<sup>36</sup> He seems to have copied the arms from his kinsmen the counts of Chastellerault, from whom he was descended, adding the crown for difference.<sup>37</sup> It was later wrongly inferred that he had added the arms of the county of Poitou to those of the duchy of Cornwall, and the ancient arms of Cornwall were thus reconstructed as having been *sable bezanty*.<sup>38</sup> No earl of Cornwall ever bore such arms, but they were attributed in the fifteenth century to various ancient kings of Britain who were linked to Cornwall, and are incorporated into the arms of the current Prince of Wales.<sup>39</sup> The earliest known example is found in Ballard's Book.<sup>40</sup>

The manor of Hailes escheated to the crown in 1226, and Henry III gave it to his brother to found the abbey that he had pledged to build in return for his deliverance from a terrifying gale in the English Channel.<sup>41</sup> Earl Richard brought monks from Beaulieu, spent ten thousand marks on the build, and the church was dedicated in 1251. He was himself buried there before the high altar in 1271, followed in 1298 by his son Edmund, the second and last earl of his line.

The fifteenth-century abbey seal, for which the matrix survives, is non heraldic, choosing to focus on the abbey relic of the ampulla containing the Holy Blood of Christ.<sup>42</sup> It was purchased in 1267 by the earl of Cornwall's son and heir Edmund from the count of Holland. The object must have cost a considerable amount of money, having been certified as genuine under the seal of Jacques Pantaléon, Patriarch of Jerusalem, and later Pope Urban IV (ruled 1261–64). Later abbots purchased indulgences from three popes (Eugenius IV, Callixtus III and Paul II) and an anti-pope (John XXIII) to

<sup>34</sup> Ashley, op cit, p.102; citing CA MS L10 which belonged to Wriothesley.

<sup>35</sup> Nicholas Vincent, *Richard, first earl of Cornwall and king of Germany (1209–1272)* New DNB.

<sup>36</sup> Douët D'Arcq no 10,188.

<sup>37</sup> For the 1227 seal of Aimery de Chastellerault see Douët D'Arcq no.1100. Richard's great grandmother was Eleanor de Chastellerault.

<sup>38</sup> Gerard J Brault, *Early blazon: heraldic terminology in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries with special reference to Arthurian literature*, 2nd ed (Oxford, 1997) pp.127–8.

<sup>39</sup> DBA vol 4 p.354.

<sup>40</sup> CA MS M3 f.73v.

<sup>41</sup> VCH Gloucs vol 2 pp.96–9.

<sup>42</sup> BM Seals 3261. The matrix is owned by the National Trust.



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encourage pilgrims to attend. Following the Reformation the abbot's lodgings were used as a home by the Tracy family, preserving some of the heraldic glass, which was later removed to their house at Toddington. Ralph Bigland (d. 1784, Garter King of Arms from 1780) described some of these pieces.<sup>43</sup> There was *Or, an eagle displayed sable*, for the founder's kingdom of Germany, and more importantly the "*arms of England*" *on a crozier*, a clear indication that the abbey was permitted to use the royal arms following the death of Edmund, earl of Cornwall in 1300, when Hailes came under the patronage of King Edward I.<sup>44</sup> The house that Bigland saw no longer exists, having been demolished in 1829 in order to build a gothic mansion for Charles Hanbury Tracy, first Baron Sudeley. Hopefully the glass still exists somewhere in the new house, which is currently the country residence of the artist Damien Hirst. John Britton, in his description of the new house which eulogised what he felt to be a wonderful example of modern architecture in the monastic style, omitted to make any mention of medieval glass.<sup>45</sup>

### **Newenham Abbey, Devon:** *or a cross engrailed sable* (for **Mohun of Dunster**).

The source that states these were the arms of Newenham is Davidson's 1843 book on the abbey.<sup>46</sup> Sir Reginald de Mohun (d.1258) lord of Dunster co-founded the abbey with his brother Sir William Mohun in the parish of Axminster in 1245 with monks from Beaulieu. The grandfather of the brothers, William de Brewer (d.1227) had founded no less than four religious houses, including the Cistercian abbey of Dunkeswell. The brothers together laid the corner stones in 1254, and were buried close together in the choir, as was the heart of their father Sir John de Mohun. Sir Reginald stood in high favour with Pope Innocent IV, who bestowed upon him the golden papal rose, and created him a papal earl, with an annuity of 200 marks.<sup>47</sup>

Another important early benefactor was Sir Giles Chauncy (d.1248) of Lifton in Devon whose arms are stated by Davidson to be the three pierced mullets which occur with Mohun on the seals of abbots Richard Branscombe (1361–91) and Leonard Houndaller (1402–1413), **Figure 11**.<sup>48</sup>

Sir Giles' son and heir Sir John Chauncy in the Charles Roll of c.1285 bore *gules three eagles displayed argent*. The likely reason why the family arms were changed, was that while Sir John was on military service it came to light that the three mullets arms was already being used by another family.<sup>49</sup> John would likely under these circumstances have chosen something that was visually not dissimilar to his father's arms. Sir Giles

<sup>43</sup> Richard Bigland (Ed), *Historical, monumental and genealogical collections relative to the county of Gloucester; printed from the original papers of the late Ralph Bigland, Garter Principal King of Arms*, 2 vols (London, 1791) vol 2 p.63.

<sup>44</sup> Cal IPM vol 4 no.603, the king himself was Edmund's heir.

<sup>45</sup> John Britton, *Graphic illustrations with historical and descriptive accounts of Toddington, the seat of Lord Sudeley* (London, 1840).

<sup>46</sup> James Davidson, *The history of Newenham Abbey* (London, 1843) p.156; Rowe, op cit p.156.

<sup>47</sup> Davidson p.207. Maxwell-Lyte op cit vol 1 pp.22–6 was dismissive of this, seeming to think that this somehow would have made him a peer in England, to which the crown would not have assented.

<sup>48</sup> Davidson, op cit p 87. The later seal is listed in BM Seals 3695–9 and was used in 1411.

<sup>49</sup> DBA vol 2 pp.166–7; Charles Moor, *The knights of Edward I*, 5 vols, Harl Soc vols 80–4 (London, 1929–32). vol 1 pp 196–7; *Transactions Devon Assoc* vol 46 p.216–7.



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Figure 10: Newenham Abbey, Devon.

on this basis perhaps bore *gules three mullets argent*, which in the thirteenth century belonged to the family of Hansard, and the reverse tinctures to Knovile.<sup>50</sup> Brother Anselm was presumably aware of the importance accorded to the arms of Chauncy on the abbey seals, and may have chosen not to illustrate them because he did not know the correct tinctures.

An impression from an undated third abbey seal survives, also charged with two shields: the founder's shield of Mohun, and *a maunch*, for which any certain attribution has proven elusive. The local family of Achym were in high favour with the last abbot, and were prominent beneficiaries in 1535 when the abbey was dissolved, but it cannot be established that they were benefactors. Their arms were later recorded as *argent a*

<sup>50</sup> DBA vol 4 p.255.

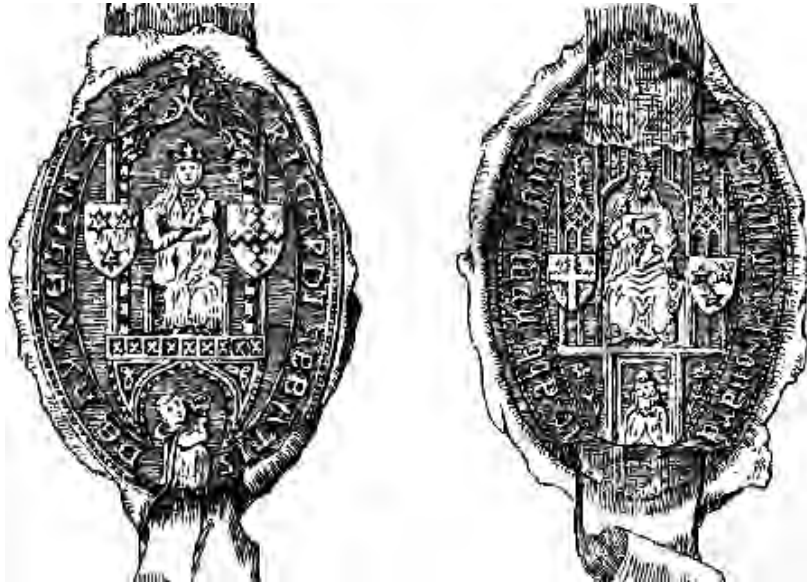


Figure 11: Newenham Abbey seals of abbots, left Abbot Branscombe, right, Abbot Houndall. Source: Davidson, see note 46.

*maunch in border sable semy of cinquefoils argent.*<sup>51</sup> Goodall recorded a fourth seal with entirely different arms, but this belonged to Newnham Priory in Beds.<sup>52</sup>

**Buckland Abbey, Devon:** *quarterly argent and gules, a crozier Or in bend.*

There is a remarkable political dimension to the arms, as recorded by William Ballard in the fifteenth century.<sup>53</sup> They are not the arms of the founder, and therefore not those which appear on the fifteenth century abbey seal (**Figure 13**).<sup>54</sup> The founder was Amice de Redvers (d. 1284) dowager countess of Devon, widow of Baldwin de Redvers (d.1245), earl of Devon and lord of the Isle of Wight, and daughter of Gilbert de Clare, earl of Hereford and Gloucester. Her husband accompanied Richard, earl of Cornwall to the Holy Land in 1240, and did not return until 1242.<sup>55</sup> Amice was the mother of Baldwin de Redvers (d.1263) the last Redvers earl of Devon, and of Isabelle de Redvers (d. 1293) countess of Aumale, and in her own right, countess of Devon. She founded the abbey in 1280, and colonised it with monks from Quarr Abbey on the Isle of Wight, founded in 1132 by her husband's great grandfather. The abbey seal with a single shield charged with the lion rampant of Redvers (*Or a lion rampant azure*) was in use c 1310 and through to the fifteenth century.<sup>56</sup>

<sup>51</sup> Davidson pp. 156, 190. There is an impression of the seal in the Society of Antiquaries Museum drawer B12,

<sup>52</sup> Ashley, op cit, p.117; VCH Beds vol 1 pp.377–81 with the seal of prior William of Woughton.

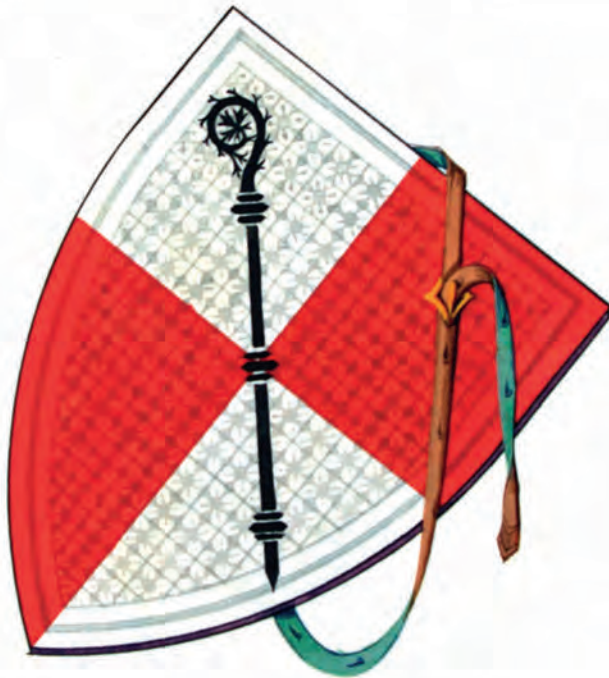
<sup>53</sup> DBA vol 4 p.423.

<sup>54</sup> BM Seals 2749.

<sup>55</sup> GEC vol 4 pp.318–9.

<sup>56</sup> Rowe p.16.

**Bockland monachorum, or Buckland;**  
**Devonshire.** ix



**Founded by Amicia Countess Dowager of**  
**Devonshire, a.d. mcccxxviii, in honour of our**  
**Lady and S. Benedict**

Figure 12: Buckland Abbey, Devon.



*Figure 13:* Seal of Buckland Abbey. Source: Oliver, see note 8.

At first sight the quarterly arms appear to make no sense at all, until it is realised that they were recorded in the period when two men, William Breton and Thomas Oliver, were in competition for the abbot's mitre of Buckland. While Breton's parentage is unknown, it is unlikely to be a coincidence that various families surnamed Breton bore quarterly argent and gules arms. The best known branch of that family resided between the twelfth and the sixteenth centuries at Witchingham Magna and Parva in Norfolk, and

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bore *quarterly per fess indented argent and gules, in the first quarter a mullet sable*.<sup>57</sup> By a curious coincidence Brother Anselm incorrectly rendered the Buckland crozier as sable. In 1464 Thomas Oliver became abbot of Buckland, but the prior, William Breton, accused him of heresy to the Abbot of Quarr, who removed Oliver and put Breton in his place. The quarrel between these two men lasted for another ten years, with appeals made to the king, to the Chapter General at Cîteaux, and to the Pope.<sup>58</sup> Finally, in 1474 Oliver was secure, quite likely because Breton had died.

The political dimension to all this was that Breton was allied to the Yorkist cause.<sup>59</sup> The Courtenays as earls of Devon had inherited the patronage of Buckland from their Redvers ancestors, but the last of his line, Thomas Courtenay, earl of Devon, was a Lancastrian adherent, executed following the Battle of Towton in 1461. That Oliver had Lancastrian sympathies is supported by the fact that he was indicted for treason in the first year of Richard III, 1483.<sup>60</sup> The obvious question arises, what on earth has the heraldry of a Devon abbey got to do with any of this? The quarterly arms were not the arms of Buckland, as stated by Ballard, but belonged to one of the contenders for the abbacy. For William Ballard to have recorded them as the arms of Buckland was a political act in itself. Whether his record was based on false information supplied by Devon Yorkists, or whether this was direct heraldic subterfuge, is impossible to determine. Ballard's career is as follows: by 1460 he was herald to Henry Holand, duke of Exeter, a Lancastrian who went into exile after the Battle of Towton. By November 1462 Ballard was in the service of Edward IV as Chester herald.<sup>61</sup> A manuscript written by a Chester herald records the re-interment of Edward IV's father Richard, duke of York (d.1460) at Pontefract in the royal presence, which must have occurred in 1461. It is followed by the text of a challenge to a tournament carried by Chester Herald to Burgundy in 1465.<sup>62</sup> Since this time period encompasses the date when Ballard was certainly Chester, the traditional view that John Water was Chester herald in 1465 must be rejected.<sup>63</sup> After Henry VI was briefly reinstated in 1470–1 there was a shake up of the heralds, and Water was dismissed as Chester, a position held in 1473 by Thomas Whiting, which suggests that by 1470 Ballard had already been promoted to March King of Arms. The territories of March included Devon and Cornwall, and there is much emphasis in Ballard's Book on these counties, including the page which included Buckland, alongside other Devon

<sup>57</sup> DBA vol 4 p.328; Francis Blomfield, *An essay towards a topographical history of the county of Norfolk*, 2nd ed 11 vols (London, 1805–10) vol 8 pp.297–311.

<sup>58</sup> David M. Smith, *The heads of religious houses in England and Wales vol 3 1377–1540* (Cambridge, 2008) pp.275–6.

<sup>59</sup> John Christopher Jenkins, *Torre Abbey: locality, community, and society in medieval Devon*, Oxford D.Phil thesis 2010, pp 216–7.

<sup>60</sup> His great adversary, the Yorkist Philip Courtenay (d.1489) of Powderham was made a knight of the body by Richard III in 1484.

<sup>61</sup> CCR 1461–8 p.300.

<sup>62</sup> BL Harley MS 48.

<sup>63</sup> Sir Anthony Wagner, *The College of Arms* (London Survey Committee, 1963) pp 120–1, 276–7 gives an extremely confused account of the offices of Chester herald and March King of Arms in this period, entirely overlooking Ballard's time as Chester.



## CISTERCIAN ABBEYS

monasteries. We must date his record of Buckland before 1474 when Oliver was back in control as abbot.

On the same page of the book in which Ballard made Breton's personal arms those of Buckland, he entered the arms of Beauchamp of Hache as being those of Forde Abbey, despite the fact that the Beauchamp line had died out a century earlier, in 1361.<sup>64</sup> It was a clear slight to the actual patrons of that abbey until 1461, the Courtenays, whose example to the local population as supporters of the House of Lancaster needed to be expunged by the new Yorkist regime. To further underscore the disgrace of the earl of Devon, the page shows his arms with the normal quarterings reversed, placing Redvers in the first quarter, a mark of attainder. The arms which Brother Anselm drew to represent Buckland Abbey could only have been used for a very brief period, and constitute a ghostly relic of the Wars of the Roses.

Following its sale in 1541 to Sir Richard Grenville the abbey church itself was converted into a rather extraordinary house, which now belongs to the National Trust. Grenville's son Roger was an esquire of the body of Henry VIII, and the first officer on his flagship the *Mary Rose*, who died when the ship capsized. From 1581 Buckland was the home of Sir Francis Drake, and it remained in the Drake family until 1946.

In conclusion, these eight examples of monastic heraldry manifest the many difficulties of establishing the true identity of arms when the abbey buildings on which they were once displayed have been largely destroyed. The examples of Hailes, Forde and Buckland demonstrate how religious foundations sometimes changed their arms over time, with local politics sometimes playing a role in these changes. Where the only evidence is that provided by the abbey's seals, and more than one shield is to be found on such a seal, it is impossible to be certain whether one, more than one, or perhaps none of the arms so presented would have been regarded as the arms of the abbey itself. Where such a shield belonged to a contemporary family, the reason for inclusion must have been to cement the relationship with that family, on whose financial support and protection an abbot might hope to capitalise.

<sup>64</sup> CA MS M3 f.88; DBA vol 4 p.423.