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THE ANATOMIST’S ARMS: THE MEMORIALS TO SIR THOMAS BAINES (1622–1681) IN CHRIST’S COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE.

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Abstract

The Arms used by the anatomist Sir Thomas Baines (1622–1681) were unofficial: he received no Grant from the College of Arms. The design he utilised in his early career in Padua, employing generic crossed long-bones, seems to have been adopted from one previously used by others of the same surname. The striking anatomical precision of the Arms on his funerary monuments in Cambridge was probably at the behest of his fellow anatomist Sir John Finch (1626–1682), the long-term partner whose grave he shares.

In the Chapel of Christ’s College at Cambridge University is a striking memorial, just to the left of the altar in a position of honour (**Figures 1 and 2**). It commemorates two alumni of the College, Sir John Finch (1626–1682) and Sir Thomas Baines (1622–1681), who are buried a few feet away, in front of the altar and within its rails, below a black ledger slab (**Figure 3**) bearing their names and two oval intaglio cartouches containing Arms in low relief, well cut and detailed:

“HERE LIE THE BODIES
OF Sr IOHN FINCH,
AND Sr THOMAS BAINES,
KNIGHTS.”

In September 1681, Sir Thomas Baines had died in Constantinople of a “malignant double tertian”. Sir John Finch, then Charles II’s ambassador to the Sublime Porte and Baines’ lifelong partner, buried his entrails in the foreigners’ cemetery at Pera with a monument, of which a copy of the epitaph survives in the British Library. His body was embalmed for shipment back to England.¹

Baines was buried in Christ’s College Chapel a year after his death, in September 1682; Finch barely outlived this, dying in November 1682, and was interred beneath the same ledger in the chapel sanctuary. Since he had made arrangements for the burials, it

¹ Archibald Malloch, ‘Sir John Finch and Sir Thomas Baines’, *Proceedings of the Royal Society of Medicine* vol 9 (1916), pp.155–158; Jean Wilson, ‘Two names of friendship, but one Starre : Memorials to Single-Sex Couples in the Early Modern Period’, *Church Monuments* vol 10 (1995), pp. 70–83.

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Figure 1: The Finch-Baines monument by Joseph Catterns in Christ's College Chapel, Cambridge. Photograph by Paul A Fox.



Figure 2: Detail of the Finch-Baines monument (photograph: Paul A Fox)



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Figure 3: The ledger slab to Finch and Baines in the sanctuary of Christ's College Chapel. Note the crescent for difference on the arms of Finch. Photograph by Paul A Fox

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seems likely that the spare and elegant design was by Finch himself, although the execution (by an unknown hand) may have been managed by his nephew Daniel, second Earl of Nottingham. Finch's Arms were on the dexter side of the slab, perhaps reflecting his higher rank, but also in the husband's position in impaled Arms. He is similarly positioned on the standing monument, and in the pendant portraits by Carlo Dolci painted for the couple in Italy and now in the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge. The standing monument is by Joseph Catterns, and was erected by Daniel Finch. Of high quality and even higher interest it takes the form of a marriage monument, as Wilson has shown², and is one of the most explicit commemorations of a same-sex relationship known from the Early Modern period.³ The lives of Finch and Baines are well-documented, especially Finch's final appointment as Charles II's ambassador to Constantinople in 1672–1681: what is most relevant here is that Finch was the scion of a noble house distinguished in public service. His grandfather was Earl of Winchelsea, his father was Speaker of the House of Commons, and his elder brother Lord High Chancellor and Earl of Nottingham; while Baines came from a yeoman farming family at Whaddon near Cambridge, and was only able to attend Christ's College by earning his keep as a sizar, attending on wealthier contemporaries.⁴

Baines, four years the elder, became Finch's sizar, and they formed an attachment which lasted for the rest of their lives, and which Finch's family accepted as being the equivalent of a marriage. It was also publicly accepted: Finch was knighted shortly after the restoration of Charles II, and on his appointment as ambassador to the Sublime Porte in 1672 he insisted that Baines also receive the honour so as to have the same precedence at the Ottoman Court. Prior to his diplomatic career, however, Finch had been a student and then teacher of anatomy in 1653–1660 at the University of Padua in northern Italy, the oldest and one of the most noted medical schools in Europe. Baines had been his colleague (both graduated M.D. there in 1660), and it has been argued that because Finch had a hare-lip, he probably had a speech impediment and would have conducted the actual dissections of cadavers while Baines instructed the students in what was happening.⁵ Their medical standing in England was considerable, and was such that when they returned in 1660 both were made Cambridge M.D. and Fellows of the Royal College of Physicians. Both became Fellows of the Royal Society in 1663.

Finch was clearly an astute academic politician: on the east side of the Lower Loggia in the Palazzo Bo, the ancient central structure of the University of Padua, is an impressive life-sized bust dedicated by the faculty of law in 1657, with a Latin inscription lauding him as "that most active defender and restorer of academic privileges" (**Figure 4**). Finch was in the Arts University, which included the medical school, and such an honour granted by the Jurist University (the law faculty), suggests that he possessed diplomatic gifts of a high order.⁶ It may have been this that commended him to King Charles II as his envoy to the Grand Duke of Tuscany. Another factor was that the couple had spent

² Wilson, *op. cit.* note 2.

³ Alan Bray, *The Friend* (Chicago, 2003).

⁴ Malloch, *op. cit.* note 1; Wilson, *op. cit.* note 2; G. F. Abbott, *Under the Turk in Constantinople* (London, 1921).

⁵ Jean Wilson, 'A neglected monument to Sir John Finch in Padua', *The Burlington Magazine* 2007 (149) pp. 853–855; and personal communication to NH 2008

⁶ Wilson, *op. cit.* note 7.



Figure 4: Courtyard of the Palazzo Bo showing the upper and lower eastern loggias. The Finch monument is prominent with its two columns in the first bay to the right of the door of the Lower Loggia. (Photograph by Paul A Fox)

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Figure 5: Detail of the arms of Baines from his monument at Christ's College.
Photograph by Paul A Fox.

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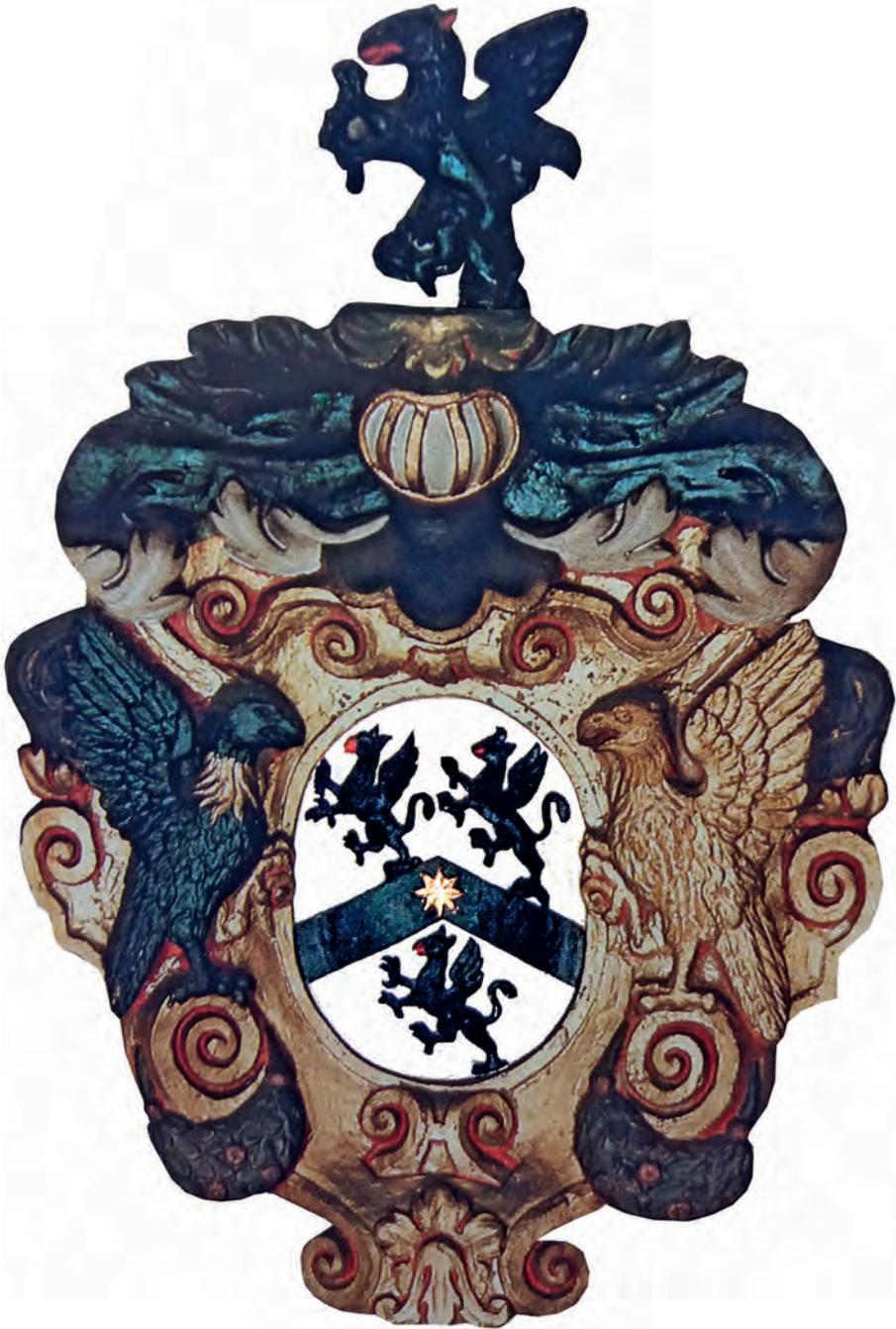


Figure 6: The arms of Sir John Finch with supporters dating 1657 from the Atrium of the Hall of Letters at Padua (no. 2810). Note the mullet for difference.

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Figure 7: The arms of Thomas Baines from the Hall of Hippolytus at Padua (no. 1095) dating 1656. Identical arms dating 1657 occur in close proximity to those of Finch in the Atrium of the Hall of Letters at Padua (no.2812).

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1659–60 in Tuscany and were already known to the Medici; Finch did not consider it formally necessary to have Baines accorded equal status there.

A frequent corollary of knighthood is a Grant of Arms. Finch already had Arms, those of the Earls of Winchelsea from whom he descended, and these appear on the monument and ledger slab in Christ's College Chapel. Baines has a coat of arms and crest shown on these shared memorials of an unusual and striking design: on the standing monument the shield is quartered by two long bones crossed at right angles. They are human femora, sufficiently detailed to be identifiable as both being from the right leg, in front and rear views respectively. The crest above is a hand grasping a human mandible, the molars and condyles clearly shown (**Figure 5**). This would be an appropriate coat of arms for an anatomist, and one that might possibly have been designed by one of the Heralds, given the tradition of allusion and visual punning on names and occupations in many grants. The design is, however, strikingly bold and plain for arms of this period, and moreover the College of Arms has no record of a grant to a Thomas Baines in the entire period under consideration.⁷

We must consider the possibility that Baines acquired his own arms and used them for sufficiently long that they became accepted by custom, although not authorized, so that by the time of his and Finch's deaths they could be used on their funerary monument and grave slab without remark. The question then is, when did Baines adopt a coat of arms, and why? There is good evidence in the Palazzo Bo that Baines was using arms during the period that he and Finch studied there in the late 1650s. The courtyard of the Bo is surrounded with a two storey cloister or Loggia, its walls crammed with many hundreds of carved coats of arms (in Italian: stemmi) of students, teachers and alumni from all parts of Europe, its vaults similarly painted with heraldic frescos. The principal rooms around the courtyard, notably the Great Hall, are similarly decorated. Altogether more than three thousand shields are recorded, although this includes a substantial number of duplicates.

In the official catalogue there are three examples of Finch's arms (**Figure 6**) and two examples of a version of Baines's, the latter differing from the later monumental examples – using crossed bones *in saltire*, the bones apparently generic and not specifically femora.⁸ On one he is labelled as “Tomas Baines”, on the other “Thomas Baines” (**Figure 7**); the former, in the atrium of the Hall of Letters is positioned close to a larger escutcheon of Finch which has an accompanying inscription lauding Finch's academic-administrative role. My contention is that when Finch and Baines arrived in Padua, they found that Continental families took a much less formal attitude to arms than in England, where Heraldic Visitations regularly purged illegal use of armorial bearings throughout the seventeenth century, and often simply adopted a design of personal choice, which became accepted by use. It is worth noting that William Harvey [1578–1657] discoverer of the circulation of the blood and another Cambridge student at Padua, used the shield of a hand holding a caduceus-like object (**Figures 8 and 9**), which appears as

⁷ Peter Gwynn-Jones, late Garter Principal King of Arms, personal communication to NH, 2008.

⁸ Lucia Rossetti, Elisabetta Dalla Francesca, Mario Guiotto and Alfonso Mottola, *Gli Stemmi dello Studio di Padova* (Trieste, 1983). The other published sources which did not prove useful in this instance are George Darwin, ‘On monuments to Cambridge men at the University of Padua’, *Proceedings of the Cambridge Antiquarian Society* vol 8 (1894) pp. 337–347; and I.L.Andrich, *De Natione Anglica et Scota Iuristarum Universitatis Patavinae Ab MCCXXII usque Ad MDCCCXXXVIII* (Padua, 1892).

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Figure 8: The arms of William Harvey from the east vault of the Lower Loggia at Padua (no.841) dating 1601. Gules a human hand clothed proper holding a candle (or torch) in flame encircled by two intertwined serpents sable.

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Figure 9: The arms of William Harvey on his doctoral diploma from the University of Padua, 1602. With the gracious permission of the Royal College of Physicians of London, MS 315.

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his crest on the Ditchingham Hall portrait of him, his shield being a quartered version of his paternal arms *Or on a chief indented sable three crescents argent*.⁹

Noble families, especially those long established as such, had complex coats of arms representing their multiple sources of descent, but many designs in the Bo seem to be rather simple. Finch's existing coat of arms fell into the noble category, while Baines seems to have joined Italian and German students in using a simple stemme, presumably by adoption. It may not have been Baines's own creation: John Guillim in 1611 shows *Sable a shin bone surmounted of another crosswise argent*, used "by the name of Baines" (**Figure 10**).¹⁰ It was followed by *two shin bones saltirewise*, pertaining to the family of Newport. The pun of bones = Baines, especially in some regional pronunciations, must have been a strong influence on whoever drafted the original grant (if there was one – it is the sort of usage which might have been adopted informally and sanctioned by antiquity). A certificate for Adam Baynes (1621–1670) an affluent and notable Parliamentarian of 'Knowstroppe in Leeds' in Yorkshire, issued between 1646 and 1658 by William Ryley, (intruded by Cromwell as Norroy King of Arms), confirms arms which thus date from at least the reign of Charles I (**Figure 11**). These show *sable two crossed* (and rather generic) *long bones argent*. The bones could be either humeri or femora. The arms are differenced with a *bezant or*. The crest is *a human right hand proper emerging from a sleeve argent, grasping a* (crudely-drawn and definitely non-human) *mandible argent on a wreath of the colours*.¹¹ The 1664 Visitation of Essex included a three-generation genealogy of the family of Thomas Baynes of Ashdon, but although he is described as a Gentleman, no arms are listed.¹² Our Thomas Baines's family in Whaddon, some twelve miles away, could be collaterals, and either or both might have adopted the existing Baynes arms.

The generic design of the arms used by our Thomas Baines thus preceded his lifetime. It seems likely that he was aware of their existence, and he might have been related to an armigerous branch of the family, so when he wanted to follow custom at Padua and have his arms recorded in the Bo, they were a natural adoption. He perhaps continued to use them in Tuscany following his departure from Padua. If so, long usage perhaps persuaded Finch that there was no necessity to apply for a personal grant in England, even after he was knighted. I know of no recorded use by Baines during his stays in either Tuscany or Constantinople, so it is impossible to ascertain whether they were made more formal and detailed during his lifetime; whether Finch put arms on the memorial he dedicated in Pera to the burial of Baines's viscera is not known.

The arms joined with those of Sir John Finch on their joint monument and joint ledger stone in Christ's College Chapel exhibit a remarkable elegance of design. In view of their anatomical specificity, with the details of the crossed right femora, and with the human mandible of the crest accurately rendered, it seems likely that the design

⁹ Rossetti et al nos 736 and 841, painted in 1601–2; J.M.Lipscomb 'New light on some Harvey portraits', *Medical History* 1982 (27) pp. 197–202 plate iv; see also Anthony Mauriello, Plinio Pioreschi and Walter J.Friedlander 'Was William Harvey's coat of arms at Padua and early example of the medical use of the Caduceus?' *Journal of the History of Medicine* vol 47 no 2 (1992) pp. 212–214.

¹⁰ John Guillim, *A Display of Heraldry* (London, 1611), p.120.

¹¹ CA Grants 22/412.

¹² J.J.Howard (Ed), *A Visitation of the county of Essex by Sir Edward Bysshe* (London, 1888) p.16.

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was sketched by an anatomist, in other words by Sir John Finch himself. Whether the monument was actually commissioned before Finch's death seems doubtful, given how short a time he was back in England, but he must have given explicit instructions to his nephew Daniel as to the arms that a noted anatomist merited.

Thus the genesis of Sir Thomas Baines's striking and allusive shield and crest seems to lie in an insouciant adoption of continental practice by adopting arms already in use by some holders of the Baines name, when he and Finch were still young men in their thirties in Padua. They may have seen continued employment in Italy and the Ottoman Empire, before their final codification, still without official heraldic endorsement, on his funerary monuments.



He beareth Sable, *shinnebone* in Pale, surmounted of another in *Crosse*, Argent, by the name of *Baines*. I doe give this forme of *blazon* hereunto, because the first lieth neerer to the *Field* than the other doth, for they cannot be properly said to be a *Crosse* of bones, because they be not incorporated one with another, but are dividedly severed by interposing the *purflings*.

Figure 10: The arms of Baines arms from Guillim's Display of Heraldry 1611 p.120

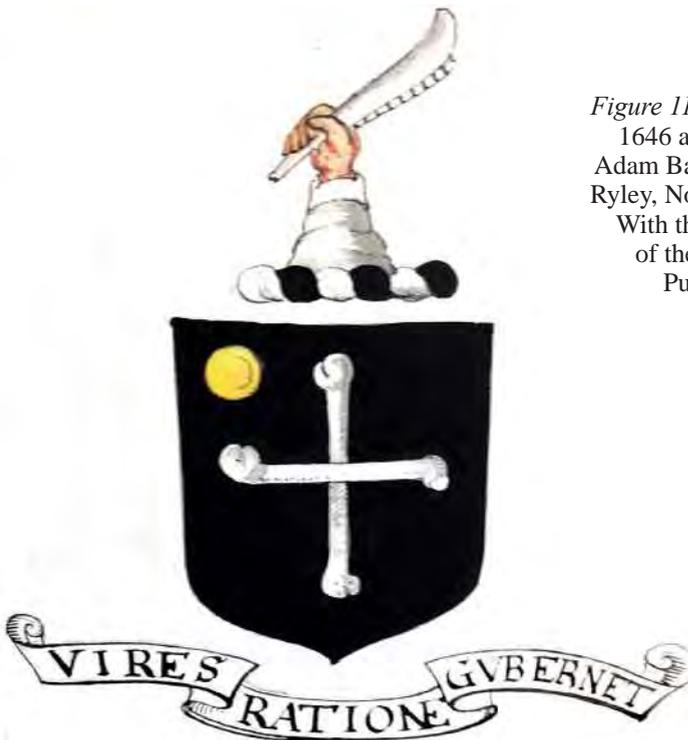


Figure 11: Confirmation between 1646 and 1658 of the arms of Adam Baynes, issued by William Ryley, Norroy. CA Grants 22/412. With the gracious permission of the Kings, Heralds and Pursuivants of Arms