

THE ARMS OF THE CISTERCIAN ABBEYS AS DRAWN  
BY DOM ANSELM BAKER Part 3:  
YORKSHIRE CONCLUDED, LANCASHIRE,  
CUMBERLAND AND NOTTINGHAMSHIRE

MICHAEL CARTER F.S.A.

**Furness Abbey, Lancashire:** *Sable on a pale argent a crosier sable; Sable a bend chequy argent and azure.*

In 1124, Stephen, then count of Boulogne and Mortain and later king of England (r. 1135–54) founded a monastery for monks of the reforming Savignac Order at Tulketh, near Preston. Three years later the monks migrated to the ‘valley of nightshade’ on the Furness Peninsula. With all other Savignac houses, the monastery merged with the Cistercians in 1148, joining the filiation of Clairvaux, St Bernard’s own abbey. Generously endowed and under the patronage of the duchy of Lancaster, the abbey of Our Lady of Furness prospered and in the fourteenth century an image of the Virgin there became an important pilgrimage destination. At the time of its suppression in 1537, Furness was the second richest Cistercian house in England, its magnificent ruins an enduring testimony to the abbey’s importance and wealth.<sup>1</sup>

Furness had multiple heraldic identities. A mid-fourteenth-century seal depicts the Virgin and Child with kneeling monks to either side, on each side a shield of arms. That on the proper right is emblazoned with three leopards for the king of England, a reference to the abbey’s royal founder. The shield on the proper left carries *Three leopards and a label of three points*. These are the arms of the earls and dukes of Lancaster, patrons of the monastery.<sup>2</sup>

The cartulary commissioned by Abbot William Dalton in 1412 is decorated with the arms of the monastery’s benefactors. Also present are the abbey’s own arms: *Sable on a pale argent a crosier gules*.<sup>3</sup> These are also attributed to the abbey in other late medieval heraldic sources.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> W. Farmer and J. Brownbill, ‘House of Cistercian Monks: the abbey of Furness’, *VCH Lancaster* vol. 2 (London, 1908), pp. 141–131.

<sup>2</sup> R. H. Ellis, *Catalogue of Seals in the Public Records Office: monastic seals*, v. 1 (London, 1986), p. 36.

<sup>3</sup> TNA, DL/42/3; BL Add. MS 33244. For discussion of the illumination see K. L. Scott, *Later Gothic Manuscripts, 1390–1490*, 2 vols (London, 1996), vol. 1, pp. 121–23.

<sup>4</sup> CA MS L10, 65.



Figure 1: Furness Abbey, Lancashire. This and subsequent photographs of artwork by Dom Anselm Baker taken by Paul A. Fox and reproduced with the gracious permission of the Abbot and Community of Mount St Bernard's Abbey, Leicestershire.



Figure 2: Whalley Abbey, Lancashire

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A different coat was recorded by Thomas Tonge in 1530: *Sable a bend checky argent and azure*.<sup>5</sup> A fourteenth-century stained glass window with these arms survives at Urswick parish church, the advowson of which was owned by Furness.<sup>6</sup> The arms are closely related to those used from the mid-fifteenth century by Clairvaux (*Sable a bend checky argent and gules*)<sup>7</sup> and likely reflect Furness's filiation with this great Cistercian monastery. It has been argued that a variant of these arms with trefoils on a bend compony which occurs in the early-fifteenth-century Great Cloister of Canterbury Cathedral might be attributable to Furness.<sup>8</sup>

**Whalley Abbey, Lancashire:** *Gules [sic] three whales haurient argent in the mouth of each a crosier or; Or a lion rampant purple*

In 1296, the monks of Stanlow Abbey, Cheshire, migrated to their new home at Whalley in Lancashire, a move supported by their patrons, the de Lacy family. The rampant lion of the de Lacy arms occurs on the abbey's seal as early as 1360. Whalley, in common with several other monasteries, including nearby Sawley, had multiple heraldic identities. The seal of Abbot John Lindley, in use in 1363, is decorated with a shield bearing three whales, each with a crosier issuing from its mouth, clearly canting on the abbey's name.<sup>9</sup>

South of the river Ribble, Whalley was technically in the ecclesiastical province of Canterbury and into the sixteenth century its abbots attended convocations of that province's clergy.<sup>10</sup> However, that it was regarded as a northern English house is suggested by its inclusion in Tonge's visitation. He records two arms for the abbey: those of de Lacy (*Or a lion rampant purple*) and the canting arms (*Azure three whales haurient argent, in the mouth of each of crosier or*).<sup>11</sup>

**Calder Abbey, Cumberland:** *In one grand shield, three shields. 1. Or a fess between two chevrons gules (for Fitzwalter); 2. Gules three lucies palewise argent (for Lucy); 3. Sable a fret argent (for Harington).*

After the failed first foundation of 1134–38, Calder was successfully resettled by as a daughter house of Furness in 1143 under the patronage of Ranulph Meschin, lord of

<sup>5</sup> W. H. D. Longstaffe, ed., *Heraldic Visitation of the Northern Counties in 1530 by Thomas Tonge*, Norroy King of Arms, Surtees Society, 41 (1862) p. 92.

<sup>6</sup> P. Hebgin-Barnes, *The Medieval Stained Glass of Lancashire* (Oxford, 2009), pp. 121–25.

<sup>7</sup> See the arms illuminated in the manuscript from the abbey now at Troyes, Bibliothèque de Troyes, MS 167, f. 29r.

<sup>8</sup> Paul A Fox, *Great Cloister, a lost Canterbury tale* (Oxford, 2020) p.335.

<sup>9</sup> J. A. Goodall, 'The Arms of Religious Corporations', in S. Ashley, ed., *At the Roots of Heraldry: collected papers of John Archibald Goodall*, Harl. Soc., N.S. vol. 21 (2018) p. 136.

<sup>10</sup> For discussion of Whalley as a northern monastery, see M. Carter, *The Art and Architecture of the Cistercians in Northern England, c.1300–1540* (Turnhout, 2019), pp. xl–xli.

<sup>11</sup> Longstaffe op. cit. p. 90.

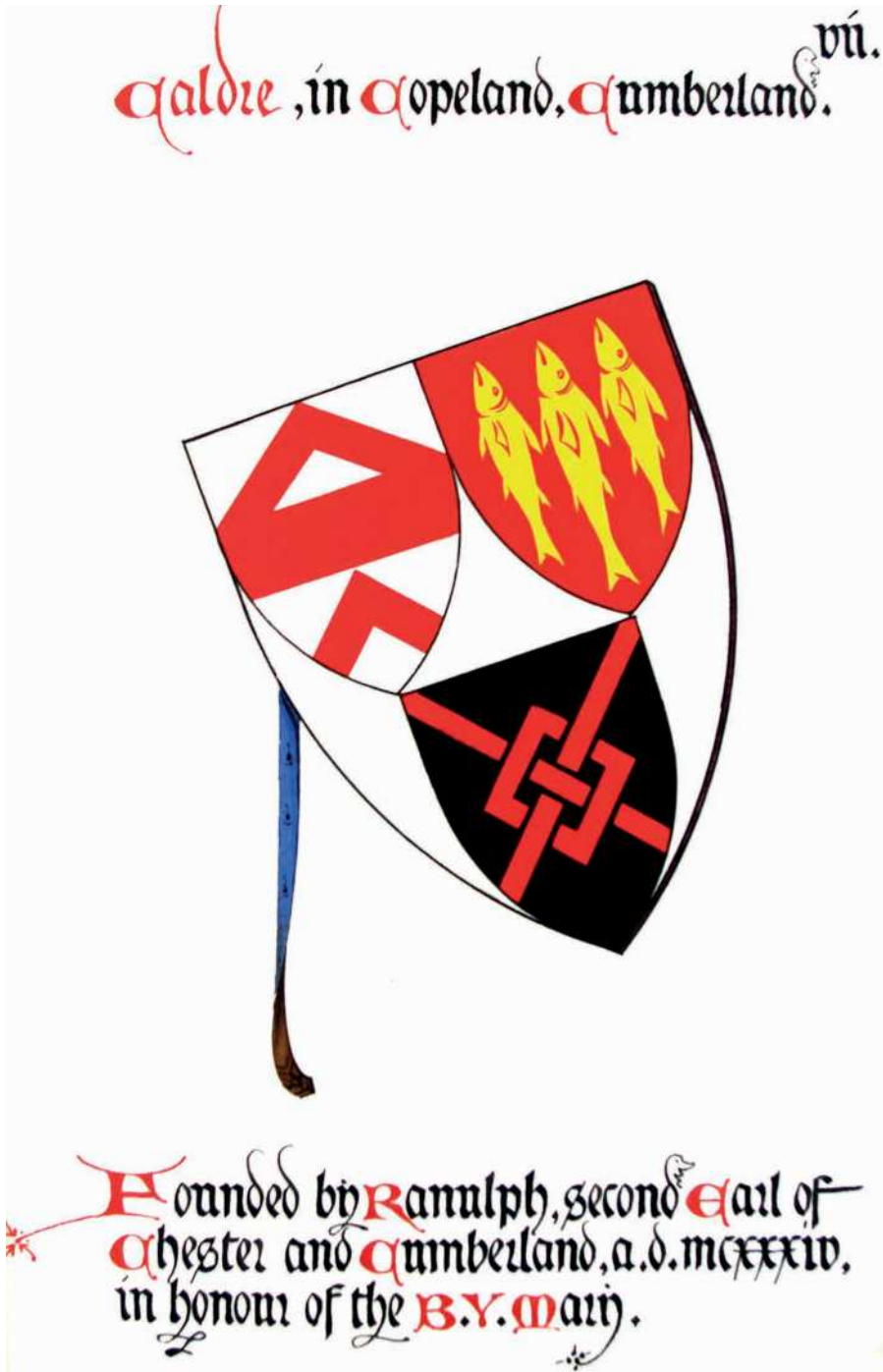


Figure 3: Calder Abbey, Cumberland

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Cumberland.<sup>12</sup> The abbey's arms recorded by Thomas Tonge are those of the founder's later descendants, Fitzwalter, Lucy and Harington.<sup>13</sup>

Calder was never a large or wealthy monastery, and in 1535 its income was assessed as a mere £50. Nevertheless, throughout its history it occupied an important religious, social and economic position in its locality. Well into the late Middle Ages, it provided the resting place for local elites. The shields on fourteenth-century military effigies at the abbey are sculpted with the arms of Le Flemmyng, Leyburne and Harington, all documented as benefactors.<sup>14</sup>

**Holm Cultram Abbey, Cumberland:** *Azure a cross moline or impaling a lion rampant sable*

Located close to the border between England and Wales, this Cumberland monastery was among the richer of the Cistercian houses founded in England, and at the time of its suppression in 1538 had a church that equalled in size that of nearby Carlisle Cathedral. The abbey was a daughter house of Melrose, founded in 1150 by King David of Scotland. Cumberland was then part of his realm. Possession soon passed to King Henry II of England, who confirmed the abbey's possessions, the kings of England remaining the monastery's patrons for the rest of the Middle Ages. The entrails of Edward I were buried in the abbey's church in 1307, which was also the resting place of the father of Robert the Bruce, a fact which did not prevent him from plundering the abbey.<sup>15</sup>

Extant sculptured heraldry at Holm Cultram testifies to the abbey's royal associations. In 1509, Abbot Robert Chamber marked his election to the abbacy by adding a porch to the west front of the abbey church. A shield to the proper right of the doorway is sculpted with the royal arms of England. Mindful of his royal patron, Abbot Chamber established a chantry at the Jesus altar in the abbey's church where masses were sung for the soul of Henry II, and for the good estate of Henry VIII. The corbels of the doorway arch are likewise decorated with heraldry. The one to the proper right is sculpted with *A cross moline impaling a lion rampant*, whereas that to the proper left is sculpted with Abbot Chamber's rebus (a crosier with the initials RT to the site and a bear in the base).<sup>16</sup>

Thomas Tonge gave the arms of the abbey as *Azure a cross moline or impaling a lion rampant sable*.<sup>17</sup> The earliest extant evidence of the use of these arms at the monastery is the mid fifteenth-century funerary slab of Abbot William de Rydekar.<sup>18</sup> Abbot Chamber

<sup>12</sup> A. G. Loftie, 'Calder Abbey', *Transactions of the Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society*, vol. 8 (1886) pp. 467–504.

<sup>13</sup> Longstaffe, op. cit. p. 93; Goodall, op. cit. p. 89.

<sup>14</sup> Carter, op. cit. p. 185.

<sup>15</sup> For a recent discussion of the abbey and its history, see E. Jamrozak, 'Holm Cultram Abbey: a success story?', *Northern History*, 45 (2008), 27–36.

<sup>16</sup> This heraldry is discussed by M. Carter, "'hy...days here liven was". The Monument of Abbot Robert Chamber at Holm Cultram (Cumbria)', *Church Monuments* vol. 27 (2012), pp. 38–52.

<sup>17</sup> Longstaffe op. cit., p. 101.

<sup>18</sup> Illustrated in G. E. Gilbanks, *Some Records of a Cistercian Abbey: Holm Cultram, Cumberland* (London, 1899), pl. facing p. 84.



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quartered these arms with his rebus, as shown by stonework from the abbey which was removed after the Suppression to the nearby farm at Raby Cote. The abbey's arms are traditionally identified as fictive arms given to the founder, King David of Scotland.<sup>19</sup>



Figure 4: Holm Cultram Abbey, Cumberland.

<sup>19</sup> T. H. Hodgson, 'Note on Armorial Stones at Raby Cote', *Transactions of the Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society*, vol.1 (1901), pp.232–34.

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**Byland Abbey, Yorkshire:** *Gules a lion rampant argent overall all a crosier bend wise sinister or; Quarterly gules and argent overall a crosier bendwise sinister or.*

In 1134 a colony of monks was dispatched from Furness Abbey (Lancashire) to establish a daughter house at Calder (Cumberland). Four years later, Scottish raids forced the abandonment of the site, the community returning to Furness where they were refused readmission. The monks then headed for Yorkshire, their plight attracting the sympathy of Gundred, widow of Nigel de Albini and mother of Roger de Mowbray, who persuaded her son to take the community under his patronage. After a series of moves, the monks finally arrived at Byland on the vigil of the feast of All Saints, 1177. The abbey soon prospered and at the end of the twelfth century was described as one of the ‘three shining lights’ of northern monasticism.<sup>20</sup>

The Mowbrays retained an intimate association with Byland. The founder died in the Holy Land in 1188 where he was buried. However, in the late Middle Ages, it was believed by he was buried in a niche in the south wall of the chapter house at Byland, and it is likely that a cenotaph was mistaken as his actual tomb.<sup>21</sup> Joan, wife of John Mowbray, was buried before the high altar at Byland in 1349,<sup>22</sup> the date of her death suggesting she was likely a victim of the Great Pestilence then sweeping across England.

The first of the arms given for Byland by Dom Anselm Baker (*Gules a lion rampant argent overall a crosier bendwise sinister or*) are those of Mowbray, differenced by the inclusion of a crosier. They and are given as the arms of the abbey in 1530 by Thomas Tonge, Norroy King of Arms in his visitation records.<sup>23</sup> In 1620, the antiquary Roger Dodsworth recorded that the arms of the abbey were glazed in the window of the parish church at Bubworth, the advowson of which was granted to the abbey in 1349 by John Mowbray.<sup>24</sup> At around the same time the Mowbray lion was used to the ornament the seal of Abbot Walter de Dishford (c.1334–49), the arms likewise occurring on the seal of Abbot William Helperby (c. 1429–71).<sup>25</sup>

The second of the Byland arms painted by Dom Anselm (*Quarterly gules and argent overall a crosier bendwise sinister or*) are more difficult to explain. Although they are attributed to Byland in Peter le Neve’s Book, c.1480–1500,<sup>26</sup> they do not relate to any of the abbey’s patrons. Moreover, their similarity to the arms of Buckland Abbey, a Cistercian house in Devon, leaves a lingering suspicion that they were mistakenly attributed to the great Yorkshire monastery.

<sup>20</sup> For the early history of the monastery, see J. Burton, ed., *The Foundation History of the Abbeys of Byland and Jervaulx*, Borthwick Texts and Studies, vol.35 (York, 2006).

<sup>21</sup> R. Gilyard-Beer, ‘Byland Abbey and the Grave of Roger de Mowbray’, *Yorkshire Archaeological Journal*, vol.59 (1987), pp.61–66.

<sup>22</sup> J. Burton, ed., *The Cartulary of Byland Abbey*, Surtees Society, vol.208 (2004), pp. lxxvi–lxxvii.

<sup>23</sup> Longstaffe p. 61.

<sup>24</sup> J. W. Clay, ed., *Yorkshire Church Notes, 1619–31 by Roger Dodsworth*, Yorkshire Archaeological Society Record Series, vol. 34 (1904), p. 74.

<sup>25</sup> C. Clay, ‘The Seals of the Religious Houses of Yorkshire’, *Archaeologia*, vol.78 (1928), p.14.

<sup>26</sup> Goodall op. cit. pp. 88–89.



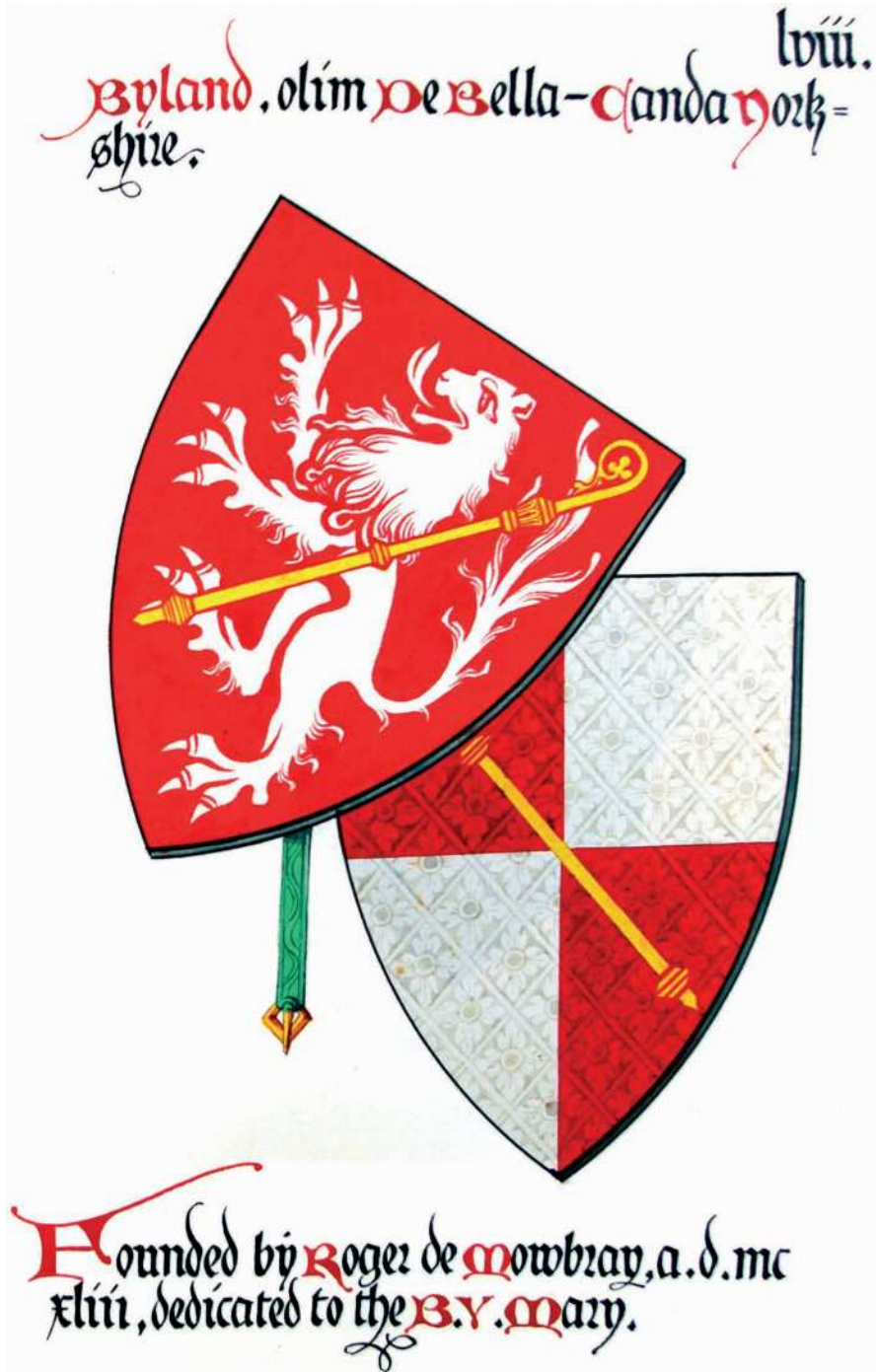


Figure 5: Byland Abbey, Yorkshire North Riding.

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**Jervaulx Abbey, Yorkshire: Quarterly, 1: Or three water-bougets sable (for Parr); 2: Barry of six argent and azure, a bordure engrailed sable (for Parr) ; 3: Azure three chevronels braced and a chief or (for Fitzhugh); 4: Vair a fess gules (for Marmion); Gules, three escallops argent (for Dacre).**

The history of Jervaulx Abbey goes back to 1150 and the monastery established at Fors, the community migrating six years later to Jervaulx in Wensleydale. The foundation of the abbey was made possible by grants made by a certain knight called Akarius Fitz Bardolf. His successors, the Fitzhenrys, later Fitzhughs, remained enthusiastic supporters of the abbey which became the family sepulchre. The family arms (*three chevronels braced and a chief*) are sculpted on military effigies at the abbey and on ex situ stonework. The arms with tinctures (*Azure three chevronels braced and a chief or*) are also illuminated in the copy of the *Polychronicon* of Ralph Higden (d. 1452), which Abbot John of Brompton acquired for the library of his abbey.<sup>27</sup>

There is firm evidence to suggest that the monastery adopted the arms of Fitzhugh as its own. They are depicted the abbey's seal in the fourteenth century, the same arms occurring on the seal of Abbot Richard Gower in c.1410, which also has a shield emblazoned with his family arms.<sup>28</sup>

At the end of the fifteenth century patronage of the abbey passed by marriage from the Fitzhughs to the Parrs of Kendall. This involved the monastery adopting the arms of Parr. These are the arms given to Jervaulx in 1530 by Thomas Tonge.<sup>29</sup> In 1517 Sir Thomas Parr appointed Abbot Robert Thornton of Jervaulx (ruled, 1510–33) as one of his executors and left the monastery £100 for the purchase of vestments with 'myn armes and my wyfes to be sett upon them'.<sup>30</sup>

Several abbots of Jervaulx also used heraldry. Abbot Gower has already been referred to. An early-sixteenth-century black mourning vestment from the abbey now at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, is decorated with the rebus of Abbot Thornton (a crosier and mitre, the initials MH and a ton or barrel), the same device occurring on his funerary slab.<sup>31</sup> A bench-end removed from the abbey at its suppression in 1537 to Aysgarth parish church is decorated with the rebus (the initials WH, a hazel bush and a ton or barrel) of Abbot William Heslington (ruled, 1475–1510). A second bench-end and a screen from Aysgarth are ornamented with the monogram of an unidentified abbot of the monastery (a crosier, mitre and the initials MH).<sup>32</sup> The modern polychrome decoration of the screen includes the second shield that Dom Anselm gives for the abbey. Whether this polychrome reflects an original scheme is uncertain. Regardless, medieval evidence of the abbey's use of this second shield is otherwise lacking.

<sup>27</sup> Discussed in Carter 2019, op. cit. pp. 83, 185.

<sup>28</sup> Clay, op. cit. p.22.

<sup>29</sup> Longstaffe op. cit. pp. 45–46.

<sup>30</sup> J. W. Clay, ed., *North Country Wills, 1383–1558*, Surtees Soc., vol.116 (1908) pp. 88–89.

<sup>31</sup> M. Carter, 'Remembrance, Liturgy and Status in a Late Medieval English Cistercian Abbey: the mourning vestment of Abbot Robert Thornton of Jervaulx (1510–33)', *Textile History*, vol. 41 (2010), pp.145–60.

<sup>32</sup> Carter 2019, op. cit. pp. 56–57.



Figure 6: Jervaulx Abbey, Yorkshire North Riding.

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**Meaux Abbey, Yorkshire:** *Argent a cross flory vair between four birds or; Argent a cross flory between four cinquefoils vair*

A daughter house of Fountains, Meaux in Holderness was founded in 1150 under the patronage of William le Gros, earl of Albermarle. The history of the abbey is exceptionally well documented thanks to the chronicle composed at the end of the fourteenth century by Thomas Burton, who had served as abbot between 1396–99. It is thanks to Burton's chronicle that we know of the abbey's miracle-working image of Christ Crucified, sculpted by a lay brother of the house on the instructions of Abbot Hugh of Leven (ruled, 1339–49). Burton took an interest in the abbey's patrons and benefactors, recording their genealogies and generosity.<sup>33</sup>

All that now remains of Meaux are a series of earthworks. In 1542, masons were employed at the recently suppressed abbey resulting in the near total destruction of its fabric, the stonework and rubble used to build defences at nearby Hull. Heraldic sources from the Middle Ages, however, record three versions of the abbey's arms, all based on those of Albermarle.<sup>34</sup> The arms *Gules a cross patonce vair* are ascribed by various sources to William de Fortibus (d.1260) the last earl of Aumale of his line, and occur on the seal of his widow Isabella in 1276.<sup>35</sup> Further evidence of the use of heraldry at the monastery is provided by the mid-fifteenth-century cartulary of the cleric Thomas Anlaby. This records the presence of the tomb of Baldwin de Béthune, a descendant of the founder who died in 1212, in the chapter house at Meaux. An illustration of the tomb shows it was located in a niche in the wall of the chapter house with the arms of the founding family above.<sup>36</sup>

### Roche Abbey, Yorkshire

Thomas Tonge did not record any arms for Roche Abbey, nor were any illustrated by Dom Anselm. A daughter house of Newminster (whose arms are unknown), the abbey is located close to Doncaster, and was founded in 1147. The patrons were two local lords, Richard de Bully, lord of Maltby, and Richard, son of Turgis. The abbey, called Rupe in the Middle Ages, took its name from a miraculous image of the Crucifixion found by one of the monks on a rock close to the monastery.<sup>37</sup>

Roche Abbey became a popular place of burial for local elites, including in 1446 Maude, dowager countess of Cambridge, a descendant of a founder. A funerary monument in the nave for one Perwyn of Doncaster and his wife Isabel is decorated with a large

<sup>33</sup> E. A. Bond, ed., *Chronica monasterii de Melsa: a fundatione usque ad annum 1396, auctore Thoma de Burton, abbate*, Rolls Series, 3 vols (London, 1866–68).

<sup>34</sup> Goodall, op. cit. p. 115. The third version is *Gules a cross patonce between four birds vair legged or*.

<sup>35</sup> DBA vol. 3 p.150.

<sup>36</sup> J. M. Luxford, '“Thys ys to remember”: Thomas Anlaby's illustrations of late medieval tombs,' *Church Monuments*, vol.20 (2005), pp.33–35.

<sup>37</sup> For an outline of the history of the abbey and a description of its ruins, see P. Fergusson and S. Harrison, *Roche Abbey* (London, 2013).



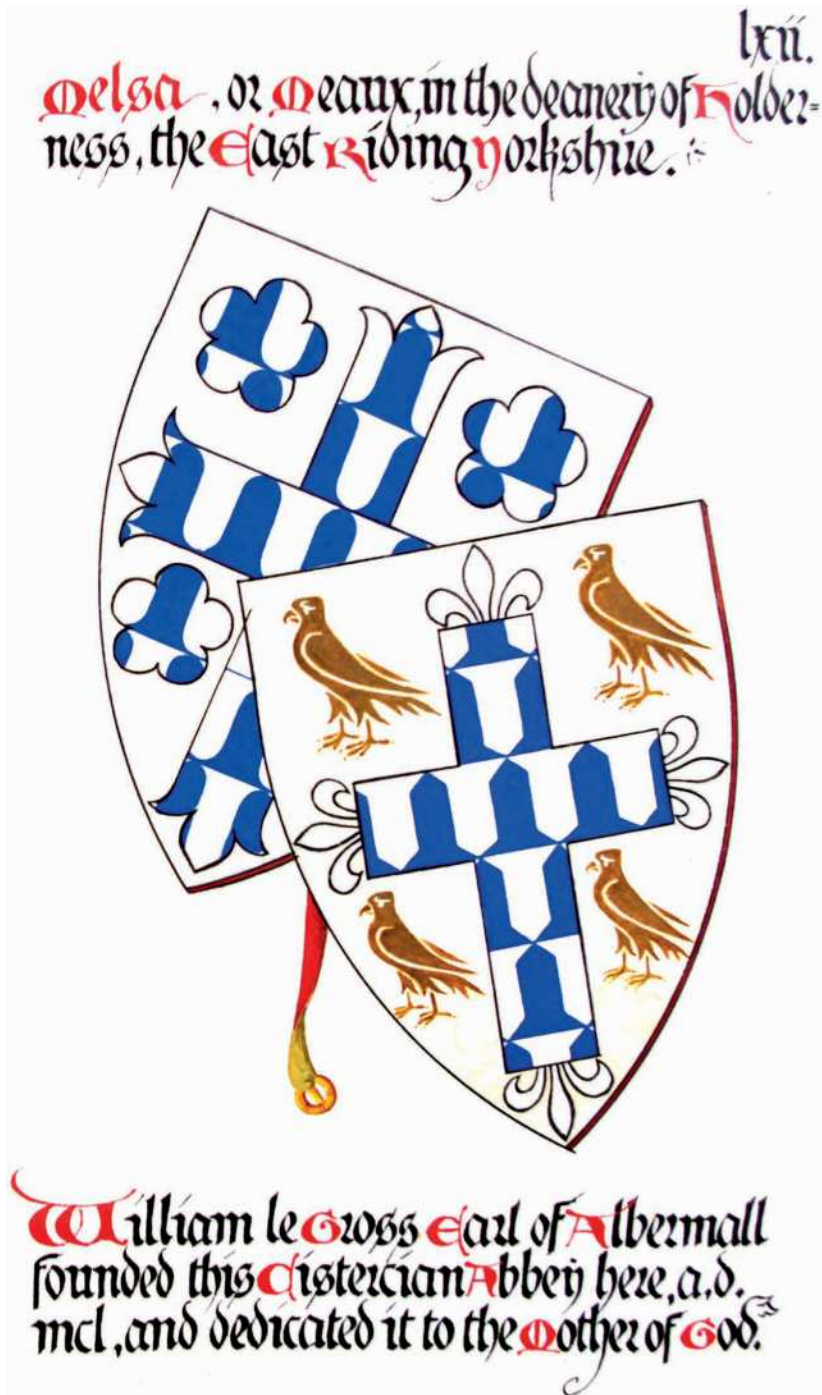


Figure 7: Meaux Abbey, Yorkshire East Riding.

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shield incised with a cross, circle and a 'P', presumably Perwyn's badge.<sup>38</sup> Testimony of the abbot of Roche during the famous dispute in the Court of Chivalry between Sir Richard Scrope and Sir Robert Grovesnor at the end of the fourteenth century records that the arms of Scrope were painted in glass in the north part of the abbey's church.<sup>39</sup>

The arms of Roche do not occur in medieval documentary heraldic sources. However, the late John A. Goodall noted a cast of the abbey's seal at the Society of Antiquaries, which was decorated with a shield emblazoned *A roach naiant between three quatrefoils*. He plausibly suggested these were canting arms punning on the name of the monastery.<sup>40</sup>

### **Rufford Abbey, Nottinghamshire:** *Azure flory a lion rampant or*

A daughter house of Rievaulx, this abbey was founded in 1146 by Gilbert de Gant, earl of Lincoln.<sup>41</sup> Located north of the river Trent, Rufford fell within the jurisdiction of Thomas Tonge as Norroy King of Arms. He commented thus on the abbey: 'The founder of Rufford Abbey, in Notynghamshire, ys the Lord Beaumont, and his armes ys azure, a lyon gold florié.'<sup>42</sup> The Beaumonts were inheritors of patronage of the abbey and intervened to its aid in the fifteenth century.<sup>43</sup>

<sup>38</sup> Carter 2019, op. cit. pp. 190, 199, 200–201.

<sup>39</sup> N. H. Nicolas, ed., *The Controversy between Sir Richard Scrope and Sir Robert Grosvenor in the Court of Chivalry*, AD MCCCLXXXV–MCCCCXC, 2 vols (London, 1832), vol. 2 p. 276.

<sup>40</sup> Goodall, op. cit. p. 122.

<sup>41</sup> The principal source for the abbey's history is C. J. Holdsworth, ed., *Rufford Charters*, Thoroton Society Record Series, vols 29, 30, 32 and 34 (1972–81).

<sup>42</sup> Longstaffe, op. cit. p. 6.

<sup>43</sup> W. Page, 'House of Cistercian Monks: Rufford', *VCH Nottingham* vol. 2, pp. 101–105.



xl.  
**Rufford**, **Ruchford**, **Rutherford**, or **Rum-**  
**ford**, **Nottinghamshire**.



**G**ilbert, **E**arl of **L**incoln, founded this  
**A**bbey to the honour of the **B**. **M**. **a**. **d**.  
**m**. **c**. **x**. **viii**. & colonised it with **m**. **o**. **n**. **k**. **s**. from **R**. **i**. **e**.  
**v**. **a**. **n**. **u**. **l**. **x**.

Figure 8: Rufford Abbey, Nottinghamshire

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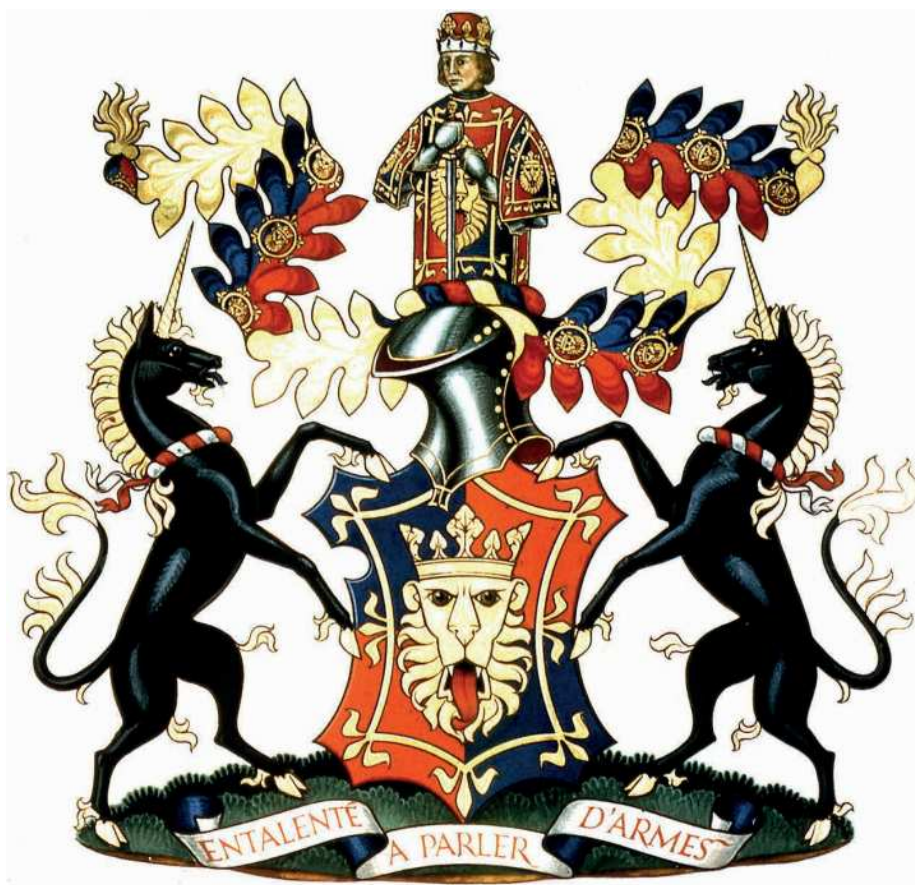
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