

The Coat of Arms

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HERALDIC FORGERY: THE CASE OF GEORGE SHAW

PETER N. LINDFIELD F.S.A.

Abstract

George Shaw was an enterprising antiquary in early Victorian Britain. He collected and studied furniture and heraldry, and he used this knowledge to produce faked historical furniture and interiors. At the heart of this imaginary recreation of past historic material was his access to a bed which was one of the most precious and important pieces of late-medieval domestic royal furniture to have survived the Civil War. Shaw's resultant furniture, particularly for his own house, demonstrate his desire to create interiors that were based on romanticised ideas of the past. These included the liberal use of arms of which his entitlement to some was questionable; others reflect his armigerous ancestors. He unfortunately abused his antiquarian knowledge both to deceive his clients and to enhance his own social prestige.

The son of a mill owner from Uppermill in the rural outskirts of Greater Manchester, George Shaw (1810–76) was interested in the past, including domestic history, ancient architecture, country houses, and furniture. Like any respectable antiquary in Georgian and Victorian Britain, heraldry also piqued Shaw's attention; he found the subject captivating and his earliest teenage diary traces his step-by-step progress understanding its visual characteristics and terminology. His later diaries, sketchbooks, and notebooks go on to demonstrate the prominent place heraldry held within his intellectual and artistic pursuits. This was no abstract, academic undertaking, for Shaw heraldry was integral to a series of audacious and unscrupulous deceptions by means of which he ensnared a number of English aristocrats: he created new pieces of Tudor-style, heraldically augmented furniture and he sold these pieces as genuine ancient 'relics'. He also produced fake historical furniture and interiors strewn with ancestral arms for his own house, St Chad's in Uppermill, and thereby fashioned personal antiquarian, or 'romantic' interiors along the lines of those at houses he visited, including Tabley Old Hall (**Figure 1**), Crewe Hall in Cheshire, Browsholme Hall in Lancashire, and the more modern Abbotsford in Roxburghshire.¹

Whilst an industry developed in nineteenth-century England to create new examples of ancient furniture cobbled-together from fragments of genuine Tudor and Elizabethan woodwork, known affectionately as 'Frankenstein' or 'cut and shut', and available especially on Wardour Street in London, such furniture was typically – but not always – generic, and created without any specific collector in mind.² They were used to create

¹ Oldham Local Studies and Archives, M175/1/2, ff. 74–83 (Tabley); M175/2/3, ff. 4–5 (Browsholme), f. 43 (Crewe), and 46–51 (Tabley); M175/1/3, ff. 85–98 (Abbotsford). For the romantic interior in Georgian Britain, see Clive Wainwright, *The Romantic Interior: The British Collector at Home, 1750–1850*, (London, 1989), and Clive Wainwright, 'Only the True Black Blood,' *Furniture History* 21 (1985), pp. 250–57.

² See Wainwright, *The Romantic Interior*, pp. 38–41, 43–45, and also Christopher Morley, "The Revival of "Old English" Style in Nineteenth-Century Furniture," *The Journal of the Decorative Arts Society*, no. 16 (1992), pp. 20–23. Shaw was not, however, alone in producing ancient-style furniture for specific clients at this time. For example Samuel Pratt of London: Nanette Thrush, "Samuel Luke Pratt, 1805–1878," *Victorian Review* 37, no. 1 (2011), pp. 13–16, and see Ian Anstruther, *The Knight and The Umbrella: An Account of the*

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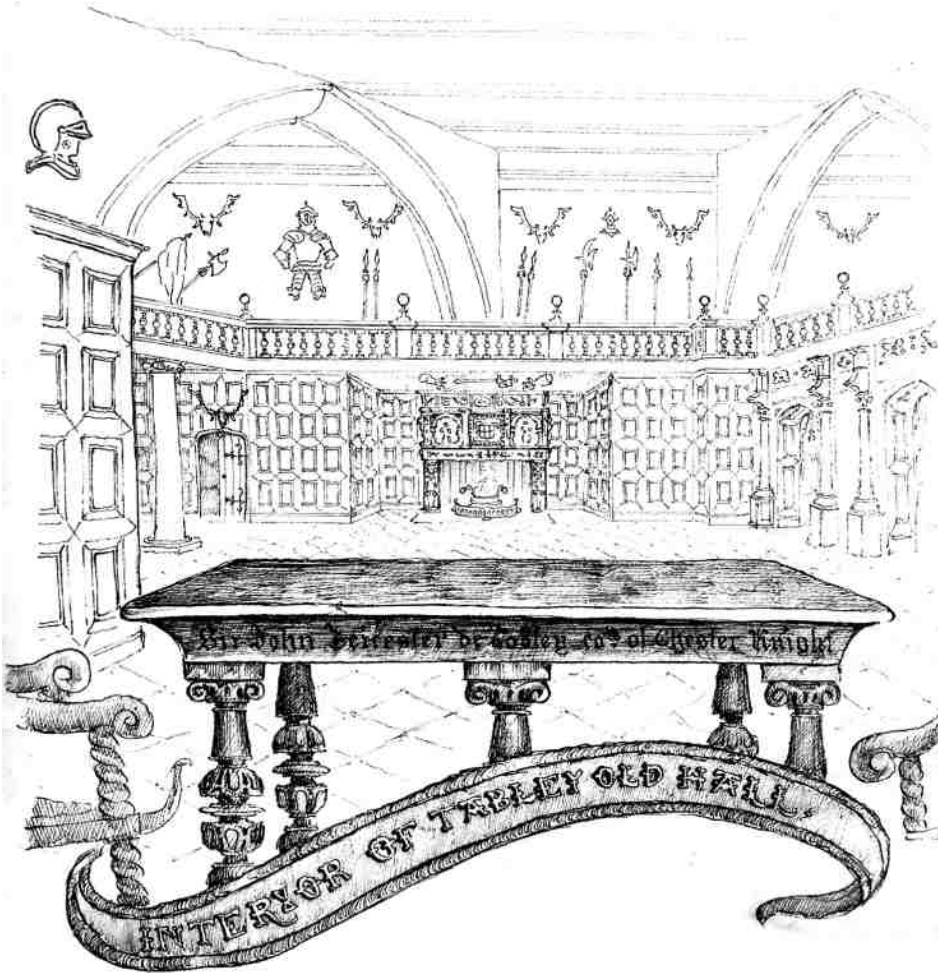


Figure 1: George Shaw: Interior of Tabley Old Hall. M175/2/3, f. 49. Courtesy of Oldham Local Studies & Archives.

interiors harking back to those that Shaw studied and drew, as in Figure 1, but they also created new examples like that depicted in Edward William Cooke's *The Antiquary's Cell* from 1835 (Figure 2).³ Shaw's productions, on the other hand, were made almost exclusively from modern carving treated to appear old – their form, ornament, style, and dark varnish were selected to create an impression of age; they were also made for very specific collectors. It was a serious business, and Shaw's documented transactions with three Victorian aristocrats demonstrate that he supplied each collector with a seemingly

Eglinton Tournament, 1839, (Stroud: Alan Sutton, 1986), pp. 128–32, or Giovanni Freppa: see Mark Westgarth, "A Biographical Dictionary of Nineteenth Century Antique & Curiosity Dealers With Full Explanation and Plates," *Regional Furniture* XXI (2009), p. 105.

³ V&A FA.42[O].



Figure 2: Edward William Cooke, *The Antiquary's Cell*, 1835. FA.42[O].
© Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

endless array of heraldically embellished ancestral furniture for which they regularly ran up bills of hundreds of pounds. Most of the furniture supplied to Algernon Percy (1792–1865), 4th Duke of Northumberland, Edward Smith-Stanley (1775–1851), 13th Earl of Derby, and George Bridgeman (1789–1865), 2nd Earl of Bradford, was inspired directly by pieces in Shaw's possession, as well as other examples that he surveyed in historic homes. Perhaps wishing to shield himself from accusations of forgery – after all he was duping powerful figures and selling goods under false pretence – he wrote to the 2nd Earl of Bradford on 5 September 1848 that,

“should these things please you I shall be happy to cause some finished packages to be sent to Weston [Park, Shropshire] & correspond with you upon the entire purchase, which for many reasons it is desired may not become publick in the neighbourhood of the proprietor.”⁴

Combined with a knowledge of heraldry, Shaw's antiquarian interests in historic furniture and interiors informed his calculated deceptions. This essay explores Shaw's interest in heraldry and its relevance to his antiquarian fabrications.

⁴ Bolton Archies and Local Studies Service, ZBR/5/9/13.

A Burgeoning Interest in Armorial

Heraldry is first mentioned by Shaw in his diary entry for 14 March 1829: he writes of sitting “with M^r Raines, this evening. Our conversation lay principally upon heraldry”.⁵ Francis Raines (1805–78), the new curate of Saddleworth church, moulded Shaw into an antiquary, and guided him towards studying heraldry. Indeed, Shaw’s entry observes that he and Raines,

“examined that ancient silver seal belonging to me, with the arms of the Radcliffes upon it; and took several wax impressions of it. He thought it uncommonly curious; and well worthy of being venerated from its aged appearance. I intend getting a book and writing a description of it and the manner in which I suppose it came into our family.”⁶

Whilst lacking specific knowledge about the seal, both Shaw and Raines were interested in it, recording what they could of it and its relevance to Shaw and his ancestors. Indeed, the remainder of Shaw’s diary entry for Sunday 14 March continues to discuss heraldry: namely the arms belonging to Raines, and a curious incident blending heraldic protocol and aesthetic discernment. He writes that,

“M^r Raines says that there has been some mistake respecting their arms lately. His brother Joseph who resides in London, went to the Heralds’ College, to get their arms painted; and was told that the arms were entered in the Heralds’ Books, but there was no crest or motto. He accordingly entered the rook for a crest, as it formed great part of the arms; and for a motto he selected a French phrase to this effect, ‘*Take me as you find me*’. A cousin of M^r Raine has lately been over to see him from Manchester where he resides, and speaking of the family arms, remarked what a curious crest they had. M^r Raines immediately asked him what it was, when he produced his seal on which he had got it engraven, from some very old family books which he had in his possession. What was M^r Raines surprise, when instead of their arms having no crest, he found they had a very grand one, a full length arm dressed in chain mail, with a spiked club or baton in its hand; and an appropriate Latin inscription or motto which I have forgot. He is much chagrined at the thoughts of his brother having entered a nasty black rook, in the books of the Heralds’ College, but he is for writing to him and telling him to alter it. His brother has got the arms with the rook crest engraved upon all his silver plate: and his father has had it patented in this manner. It will be a considerable expense having it set right, but I suppose it must be done.”⁷

So, whilst proper procedure was followed – we are not seeing here some cavalier adoption and modification of arms – aesthetics was important: the more attractive crest was preferable, and getting the new, unattractive crest replaced on the family chattels was important.

⁵ Oldham Local Studies and Archives, M175/1/1, f. 73.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid., ff. 73–74.

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Figure 3: Henry VII and Elizabeth of York Marriage Bed. © The Langley Collection.

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The next entry concerning heraldry in Shaw's diary comes on Saturday 25 July 1829, some four months later, wherein he writes that,

"I have drawn and coloured my grandfather's arms, in my reference book, this afternoon. They consist of a plain white shield, with two black bends engrailed, with a red line across them. The crest is a bull's head, with an earl's coronet about its neck. I have had some thoughts of studying heraldry a little so as to be able to understand, the terms for various colours and marks which they have."⁸

This entry, describing the Ratcliffe arms, is important. Firstly, it demonstrates Shaw's interest in his grandfather's arms – his antiquarian practice includes the study of family heraldry – but, more significantly, it demonstrates his increasing mastery of heraldic terminology. He, for example, partially blazons the arms, but the appropriate terms are not always used (for the metal and colour).

As his final sentence indicates, Shaw was still a novice when it came to heraldry, but he found the subject sufficiently interesting to warrant further study. Indeed, he continued to study heraldry, and on Thursday 3 September 1829 Shaw writes that "I have spent two or three hours every evening this week in studying heraldry and I think I shall soon understand it perfectly."⁹ And twenty days later, Shaw writes of,

"studying heraldry in the evening, which I begin to understand very well now. I can decipher coats of arms very well, except they be very intricate, and obscure, but I am not as yet, able to blazon the different quarterings of a family in their proper order. The study of heraldry is very amusing, to a person fond of antiquities. It explains the bearings and marks of honour, or dishonour of the old chiefs or feudal lords, &c."¹⁰

Whilst heraldry and antiquarian study went hand-in-hand at the time, not least given the number of high-profile antiquaries that also worked as heralds, Shaw clearly records how the understanding of arms was not only interesting – 'amusing' he writes – but also crucial to understanding history. A significant boon to his study of heraldry, and the arms of families in his locale, came courtesy of Raines, who,

"borrowed a manuscript book of heraldry, entitled *Heraldica Lancastria* being the coats of arms properly blazoned with colours, of every respectable family in Lancashire by a person of the name of Jesse Lee of Manchester. The man must have had a surprising deal of patience in y^e compilation of his book, which of large octavo size, and considerably thicker than a large Bible."¹¹

And whilst out of Uppermill with Raines, Shaw was keen to explore and record heraldic material. Indeed, he writes,

⁸ Ibid., f. 143.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid., f. 182.

¹¹ Ibid., ff. 200–01. This manuscript, *Heraldica Lancastria*, is now preserved in the Greater Manchester County Record Office, GB127.MS 929.6 L3 (4 vols).



Figure 4: Detail of the Headboard from the Henry VII and Elizabeth of York Marriage Bed. © Ian Coulson.

“I amused myself with looking at the various coats of arms. I found the arms of Shaw. They are *Argent, a cheveron contre ermine, a canton gules*. Crest, *a hawk, jissed and billed*. They are very plain but still handsome. I copied them and put for motto, ‘*Inveniam viam aut faciam*’, Which I consider is peculiarly applicable to a person without fortune or wealth, and who depends entirely on his success in his calling or profession, for his rise in the world, both in fortune and fame. I also found the arms of Radcliffe, and the various quarterings of Arderne, Leigh of the Booths, Baron Kinderton, and Sandbach, which are quartered on that old Silver Seal in my possession, and which formerly belonged to Captain Radcliffe of Shaw Hall my grandfather’s ancestor in the reign of Queen Elizabeth.”¹²

Shaw here demonstrates his mastery of heraldic terminology, an ability to read and blazon arms, recognise and engage with shields, and also his continued interest in the subject: particularly given the discovery of arms from his family’s past and of relevance to artefacts in his collection. Shaw rounded off the day by spending his evening “examining the heraldry book”.¹³ Further underlining heraldry’s importance to Shaw, he writes for 3

¹² Oldham Local Studies and Archives, M175/1/1, ff. 201–02.

¹³ Ibid.

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October that “whilst M^r R[aines] was at Greenhill I took the opportunity of once more looking over my favourite the heraldry book and the scrap book”.¹⁴

Shaw did not simply study arms, but, as the seal mentioned above demonstrates, it also extended to acquiring heraldically augmented objects. For example, he writes for Wednesday 8 April 1829 of acquiring,

“an old pane of glass from a window in Shaw Hall, which has the crest or bull’s head with a coronet round its neck, stained upon it. It is very much scratched and defaced, and has not much appearance of beauty: but through its being a crest of the Radcliffes’ and its great antiquity, I value it more than its real intrinsic value, and than what I should have done if it was not relating to our family. It must have been put into the window, when Captain Radcliff resided there, which was in the reign of Elizabeth, and I should think that the whole coat of arms must have been immediately under it, as it never or at least very seldom ever happened, that crests were stained in windows without the other armorial bearings. There is no trace however of any other stained glass in any of the windows; and indeed the house has been so often altered and realtered as to leave little vestige of its former appearance; therefore it is more to be wondered at how this small remnant of its ornaments should have been preserved in the condition in which it is at the present”.¹⁵

Shaw began to produce presentation-quality arms; something that he took great pleasure in doing. Referring to Friday 2 October 1829, he writes that,

“in the evening I drew M^r R[aines]’s coat of arms upon a large embossed card. They are, *Sable, a cheveron between three lions rampant argent*. He has two crests, one *A lion rampant couped in the middle gules*, and the other *A dexter arm clothed in mail or, holding a faton [sic] proper*. These are not the arms M^r R carried some time ago, but his father on referring to some books at Burton Constable, found that their arms were not what they then used but what they use at present. These are certainly handsomer than the other. I took great pains with them, and coloured them as neatly as I possibly could do”.¹⁶

Thus, at the end of 1829, Shaw was proud of his ability to understand, describe, blazon, draw, and colour arms. This proficiency proved crucial to Shaw’s later exploits as a furniture maker and a collector.

Heraldically Augmented Furniture

As his 1829 diary demonstrates, Shaw had a very strong grasp of heraldry aged 20; he combined this with an understanding of historic furniture – gained from a range of genuinely old examples that he viewed and collected – to create new pieces of furniture in the 1840s that were purported to be from Tudor England. Like heraldry, Shaw developed an interest in ancient furniture as a young man: on 5 September 1829 he was, “varnishing

¹⁴ Ibid., f. 206.

¹⁵ Ibid., f. 92.

¹⁶ Ibid., f. 205.

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Figure 5: Front Cresting of the Henry VII and Elizabeth of York Marriage Bed, Installed Above a Doorway in Shaw's House in Uppermill. © Ian Coulson.

an old oak chair, which I got a short time ago. It is a most superb piece of Antient chair furniture that I ever saw. The bottom is of cane work, and so is part of the back, the rest of the chair is all open flowers carved by a masterly hand. – Date 1537”.¹⁷

He took pride in this chair, and showed it off to visitors, including other antiquaries “who examined it very minutely”.¹⁸ At the end of September 1829 he saw further examples of furniture in the collection of William Robert Hay (1761–1839), Vicar of St Chad in Rochdale (1819–39). Hay, Shaw writes,

“directly proceeded to shew me his curiosities. The hall is nearly filled with old furniture. Close to the door are four little oak chairs, which he informs me he considers to be the greatest curiosities in the furniture way which he possessed, as he believed all chairs that were much carved were not so old as those that were quite plain”.¹⁹

Even more curious, and demonstrating Shaw's interest in carved oak furniture, is his record of,

“two armchairs of extraordinary large dimensions, and georgiously [sic] carved. One of them he bought in Rochdale, and the other he found in a farmhouse near Ackworth of which place he is the Rector. What makes these chairs more interesting is that they are exactly of the same pattern in every little particular, even in the colour of the wood; and they must without doubt have been both made by the same personage, and how strange that they should have separated for a very long time, and afterwards get together again in the way in which they have done. These two are placed in the chancel of the church upon all great occasions, such as the visiting of the bishop &c”.²⁰

¹⁷ Ibid., f. 162.

¹⁸ Ibid., f. 168.

¹⁹ Ibid., ff. 189–90.

²⁰ Ibid., f. 162.

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Figure 6: The Duke of Northumberland's Paradise State Bed. 1847. © Christie's.

He was also exposed to composite 'Frankenstein' furniture collected and presented in the vicarage. Shaw records entering,

"Mr Hay's dressing room or study which is in fact another library but of much smaller dimensions ... and at one end was a beautiful oak bookcase apparently very old, but my obliging conductor [sic] told me that it was made up of various pieces of carved oak which had come into his possession. If it could not be termed an original antique, it certainly merited admiration from the very tasteful manner in which it was put together".²¹

²¹ Ibid.

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Even though not an original ‘antique’, it was clearly valued for the manner in which it was brought together.

Of all those in his close network of antiquarian contacts, the most significant collector of historic furniture was James Dearden (1792–1862) of Rochdale Manor. On 3 October 1829, for example, Shaw records Dearden having shown Raines ‘a very capital collection of Antiquities and curiosities of every kind, and amongst other things, the state bed from Latham House which was there during the siege; also silver spurs, Roman altars, urns, coins &c &c &c’.²² This bed from Lathom House in Lancashire was made around 1500 for Thomas Stanley (1435–1504), 1st Earl of Derby, after Henry VII and Elizabeth of York visited in the summer of 1495.²³ Indeed, this Stanley bed was derived from another, possibly the bed that Dearden suggested Shaw should examine in 1842. In a letter from 5 October that year Shaw recalls having visited the unnamed house near Huddersfield and viewed the Tudor ‘relic’ described as

“a fine old and much dilapidated bed, near Huddersfield and which he [Dearden] wishes me to get repaired for him. – I have seen it and believe it will be one of the first and first ones after its reparation, with addition of heraldic insignia &c. &c. &c”.²⁴

Dearden did not purchase the bed, writing to Raines on 11 October 1842 that “the bed I have not yet bought and perhaps now shall not”²⁵; Shaw copied what has now been identified with certainty as the late medieval marriage bed of Henry VII and Elizabeth of York (**Figure 3**); Shaw repaired it and he painted it with a thick, dark varnish.²⁶ He also removed parts from the bed: the most important being the cresting from the tester’s front rail. Located within a network of arabesques, this cresting includes a Tudor-shaped shield quartering the arms of France modern and England; this is an example of the royal arms that were used by the later Plantagenet and Tudor monarchs, and when combined with the heraldic beasts depicted on the headboard (**Figure 4**) – the lion and dragon – it depicts Henry VII’s early arms, before the more typical and well-known greyhound was adopted instead of the lion. Given the prominent nature of the royal arms, particularly for any budding antiquary studying heraldry, Shaw would have certainly understood, at least from the shield’s quarterings, that it was late medieval. Interestingly, Shaw viewed this cresting taken from the front rail of the bed’s tester above a doorway in his house in Uppermill (**Figure 5**). With a cut-through dowel hole at the top of the shield, the armorial would have been crested by another device – presumably a crown – and this crown, if present in the 1840s when Shaw viewed the bed, appears to have been removed to allow the shield to fit in the space above the door: it is currently untraced.

The well-documented pieces of faked ancestral furniture that Shaw created for the Duke of Northumberland and the Earls of Bradford and Derby follow the general

²² Ibid.

²³ Victor Chinnery, *Oak Furniture: The British tradition: A history of early furniture in the British Isles and New England*, (Woodbridge, 1986), vol. 3, p. 454.

²⁴ Manchester, Chetham’s Library, Raines/2/2/178, 5 October 1842.

²⁵ Chetham’s Library, Raines/2/2/54, 11 October 1842.

²⁶ Helen Hughes, *The Paradise Bed – Paint Analysis*, (London, 2013), w 7.

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Figure 7: The Shield-Bearing Lions from the Henry VII and Elizabeth of York Bed.
© Ian Coulson.

form and ornament of this marriage bed.²⁷ The most dramatic are its almost wholesale copies framed as state beds sold to these and perhaps other aristocrats in 1840s England. Referring to the Northumberland derivative, something Shaw claimed to have come across via an anonymous contact, he records that it is,

“in the same style [as a pair of buffets – ‘perforated & cut through’ and] is a most magnificent bedstead – pillars similarly carved – foot board like the upper part of the cupboard or buffet – head part with Adam & Eve standing on each side of the line of life ... & inscription &c also cut through and on each side the Adam & Eve carved panel two sides partly with shields hung in shafts upon arabesque foliage similar to those in the drawing of the buffet – A very rich perforated cornice runs round & the pillars are surrounded by small lions, forming the most superb specimen of Tudor furniture in existence and traditionally designated the Paradise Bed. – Its price £70.”²⁸

This reproduction bed, when it came up for sale by Christie’s in 2004 had been stripped of the dark varnish so characteristic of his work, and its tester had also been removed (**Figure 6**). Notice how the arms on the Henry VII and Elizabeth of York marriage bed – including on the headboard, footboard, posts, and corner finials were substituted on this derivative bed for arms relevant to the Duke of Northumberland: namely the Lion rampant for Brabant and Lovaine; three fusils conjoined in fess for Percy ancient; and a crescent moon as the Percy badge. Four lions each holding a shield displaying the Yorkist

²⁷ Some of this furniture has been discussed in extensive detail in forthcoming essays by Foyle and Lindfield.

²⁸ Alnwick Castle, The Archives of the Duke of Northumberland, DP/D4/I/99, 12 August 1847.



Figure 8: The French Achievement from the Henry VII and Elizabeth of York Bed and Now at Chetham's Library: Removed from the Sideboard for Protection. © Peter N. Lindfield; Courtesy of Chetham's Library.

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Figure 9: The English Achievement from the Henry VII and Elizabeth of York Bed and Now at Chetham's Library: Removed from the Sideboard for Protection. © Peter N. Lindfield; Courtesy of Chetham's Library, Manchester.



Figure 10: George Shaw's Sideboard for Chetham's Library. © Peter N. Lindfield; Courtesy of Chetham's Library, Manchester.

(rather than Tudor) rose (**Figure 7**) were detached but preserved. Shaw fluffed the Percy arms, which are five rather than three fusils. This error was discovered, but not until after a good number of faked pieces of furniture had been sent up to the Duke. The arms were, however, corrected for subsequent commissions.

Unlike the Duke of Northumberland's state bed, not all of Shaw's faked ancestral furniture was made from new pieces of wood; some included ancient woodwork. For example, the sideboard Shaw supplied with other examples of modern Gothic furniture to Chetham's Library in central Manchester originally included two very curious and important medieval achievements originally set within the stage-top pinnacles (**Figures 8–10**).²⁹ Made from medieval oak which is undatable using dendrochronological analysis, like the rest of the Henry VII and Elizabeth of York marriage bed, these achievements are the unquartered royal arms of England and France, surrounded by supporters, crown, and motto. Shaw clearly valued them, and he removed and re-used them along the same lines as the cresting taken from the front rail of the bed's tester (**Figure 5**). Indeed, he removed other pieces of heraldic decoration from the bed, including an early eighteenth-century

²⁹ These arms have been removed from the sideboard for safety reasons, and Shaw's work for Chetham's Library is the subject of an essay Jonathan Foyle and Peter N. Lindfield, "A Forger's Folly?: George Shaw's Productions for Chetham's Library, Manchester," *The British Art Journal* XXI, 3 (2020–2021), pp. 42–50.

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Figure 11: The Eighteenth-Century Achievement Removed from the Henry VII and Elizabeth of York Bed and Installed in St Chad's, Uppermill. © Ian Coulson.

achievement installed on the top of the tester rail (**Figure 11**)³⁰; re-using heraldic spolia from the bed appears to have been important to his antiquarian practice. Harvesting spolia from the bed, Shaw was clearly attempting to create fake ancient ancestral furniture and his own romantically furnished house by using genuine medieval woodwork from one of the best examples of domestic Tudor royal furniture to survive the Civil War.

Shaw's house survives to this day, serving as Uppermill town library, and it is possible to see the interiors covered with dark-varnished panelling augmented with coats of arms. Some of these arms are indebted directly to the bed. One panel, for example, depicts the bed's Tudor royal arms on a flag borne by a crowned lion (**Figure 12**), while other panels contain arms relevant to Shaw through family connections already discussed. Three of these arms were used by Shaw in the design of his own bookplate (**Figure 13**). One of these *Argent two bends engrailed sable, a label gules* is the same previously described in his notebook as 'plain white shield, with two black bends engrailed, with a red line across them' belonging to his grandfather (Radcliffe).³¹ The second is the arms of Shaw,

³⁰ See Andy Moir, *Dendrochronological Analysis of Oak Carvings from St Chad's House, Uppermill, and Chetham's Library, Greater Manchester: Tree-Ring Services Report, OLUM/47/19*, (Mitcheldean, 2019), pp. 4–12.

³¹ Oldham Local Studies and Archives, M175/1/1.



Figure 12: Detail of the Interior of St Chad's, Uppermill, Showing Shaw's Rendition of the Royal Arms Borne by a Crowned Lion. © Jonathan Foyle.

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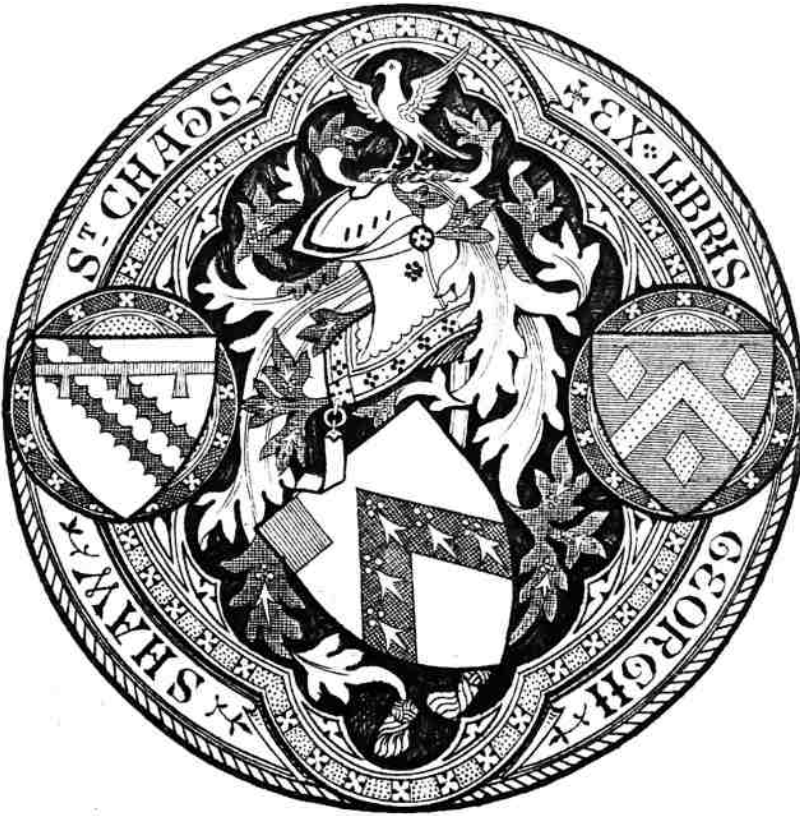


Figure 13: George Shaw's Bookplate. Courtesy of Oldham Local Studies & Archives.

*Argent a chevron contre ermine, a canton gules.*³² The arms of Shaw and Radcliffe were incorporated into the memorial window to his parents installed in Saddleworth Church in 1863.³³ The third is the Hydes in Cheshire. Here on the room's panelling, Shaw represents these arms in various ways and levels of complexity: as flags, singular shields, or augmented with helms, mantling, and a *banderole*, and, on other occasions, impaled (**Figure 14**). This creates a rich heraldic and ancestral environment. In form, ornament, and purpose, these interiors are remarkably similar to a panelled heraldic room that Horace Walpole (1717–97) designed for his own modern Gothic house, Strawberry Hill in Twickenham, before 3 August 1750, but which was never realised.³⁴ This recreation of the heraldically rich past had a strong tradition in medieval interiors and modern, romantic revivals.

³² Ibid., the crest of Shaw he described as *A hawk jessed and billed*.

³³ Joseph Bradbury, *Saddleworth Sketches* (Oldham, 1871), p. 61.

³⁴ See Peter N. Lindfield, "The Panelled Heraldic Apartment of Horace Walpole (1717–1797) at Strawberry Hill," *British Art Journal* XVIII, no. 3 (2018), pp. 92–98.



Figure 14: Detail of the Interior of St Chad's, Uppermill, Showing Shaw's Armorial Decoration.
© Jonathan Foyle.

The creation of Shaw's romantic interiors at St Chad's is recorded first-hand by an emissary of the Duke of Northumberland, one Mr Burd, who was dispatched to Uppermill when suspicions over the large amount of historic furniture bedecked with ancestral heraldry – and incorrect heraldry at that – was sent north. Burd's letter dated 10 May 1848 is particularly enlightening because it describes Shaw's house and its interiors in detail. It begins by noting that Shaw,

“enquired first who united me to him. I said I had heard of his fame as a collector of old oak furniture, and being an enthusiast in antiquities I had, happening to be in Manchester, come over to see his furniture.”³⁵

Upon crossing the house's threshold, Burd records that Shaw,

“first showed me his hall with a beautiful double twisted oak staircase – the hall filled with fine suits of armour &c then into a small room – where his father was sitting for his portrait. In this room was a magnificent chimney piece all well in character though, as he told me, collected and put together. No arms or heraldic inscriptions were there except a new one in paint of their own arms... but the carving of this as of everything else is

³⁵ Alnwick Castle, The Archives of the Duke of Northumberland, DP/D4/I/99, 10 May 1848.

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*Top, Figure 15: Interior of the Dining Room at St Chad's, Uppermill.
Bottom, Figure 16, Main Hall of the same house, both from Allen Mellor & Co,
"St. Chad's," Uppermill, Saddleworth, Yorks.(1920).*



Figure 17: A 'Shaw' caquetteuse chair in the Main Hall at St Chad's, Uppermill, from Allen Mellor & Co, "St. Chad's," Uppermill, Saddleworth, Yorks. (1920).

exquisite – in the same room near the window is an inlaid (wood) cabinet and a settle of Charles II's time – he has nothing earlier than Henry VIII.”³⁶

Shaw admitted manufacturing the chimney piece, and heraldry, including shields belonging to his armigerous ancestors. Next, Burd was escorted to the,

“drawing room; beautiful chairs and panelled all round. In each panel are the arms of his own family or connections. He says his family have been living in the neighbourhood since the time of Henry 8th – the panelling is done by himself but appears old.”³⁷

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.



Figure 18: A 'Shaw' bed in the Bedroom Over Hall at St Chad's, Uppermill, from Allen Mellor & Co, "St. Chad's," Uppermill, Saddleworth, Yorks. (1920).

This decorative scheme is hardly innovative as an antiquarian conceit, but the fact that he produced the panelling himself and designed it to appear old is an important indication of his mimetic working methods. Indeed, Burd records that "he has a peculiar method of making everything assume a fine black or brown tinge",³⁸ which, especially from the eighteenth century, was considered to be a mark of antiquity.³⁹

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ See Wainwright, "Black Blood," pp. 250–57.

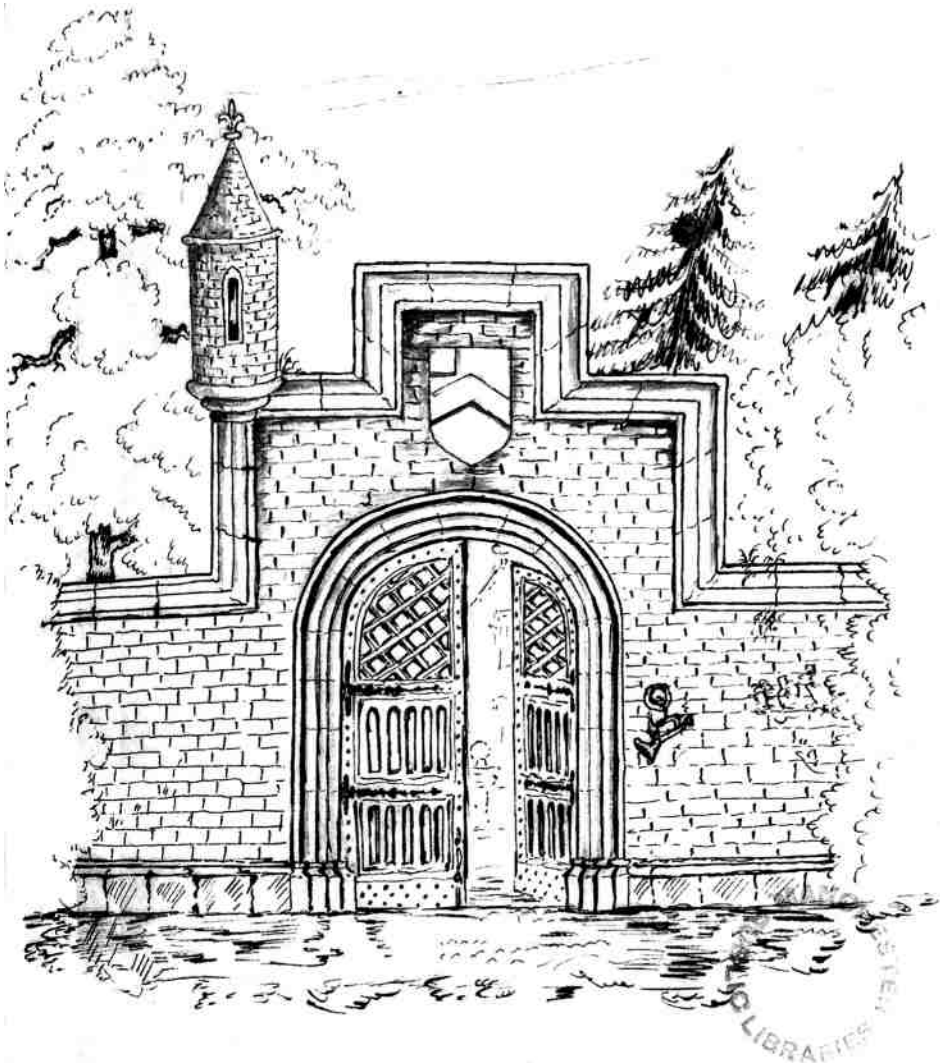


Figure 19: George Shaw, Design for a Gateway to Shaw's property, Uppermill. 1732. M175/1/3, f. 75. Courtesy of Oldham Local Studies & Archives.

An impression of the house full of Shaw's possessions and ancestral, heraldic fabrications, can be seen in photographs of the interior of the Drawing Room (**Figure 15**) and the Main Hall (**Figure 16**) included in the catalogue accompanying the 1920 auction that cleared the house. Revealing a rich interaction between Gothic-style panelling, particularly the chimneypiece overmantel mentioned in Burd's letter, the heraldic panelling, and the historic furniture, this was the clearly a romantic interior *par excellence*. The photographs also detail pieces of furniture that are currently undocumented, but

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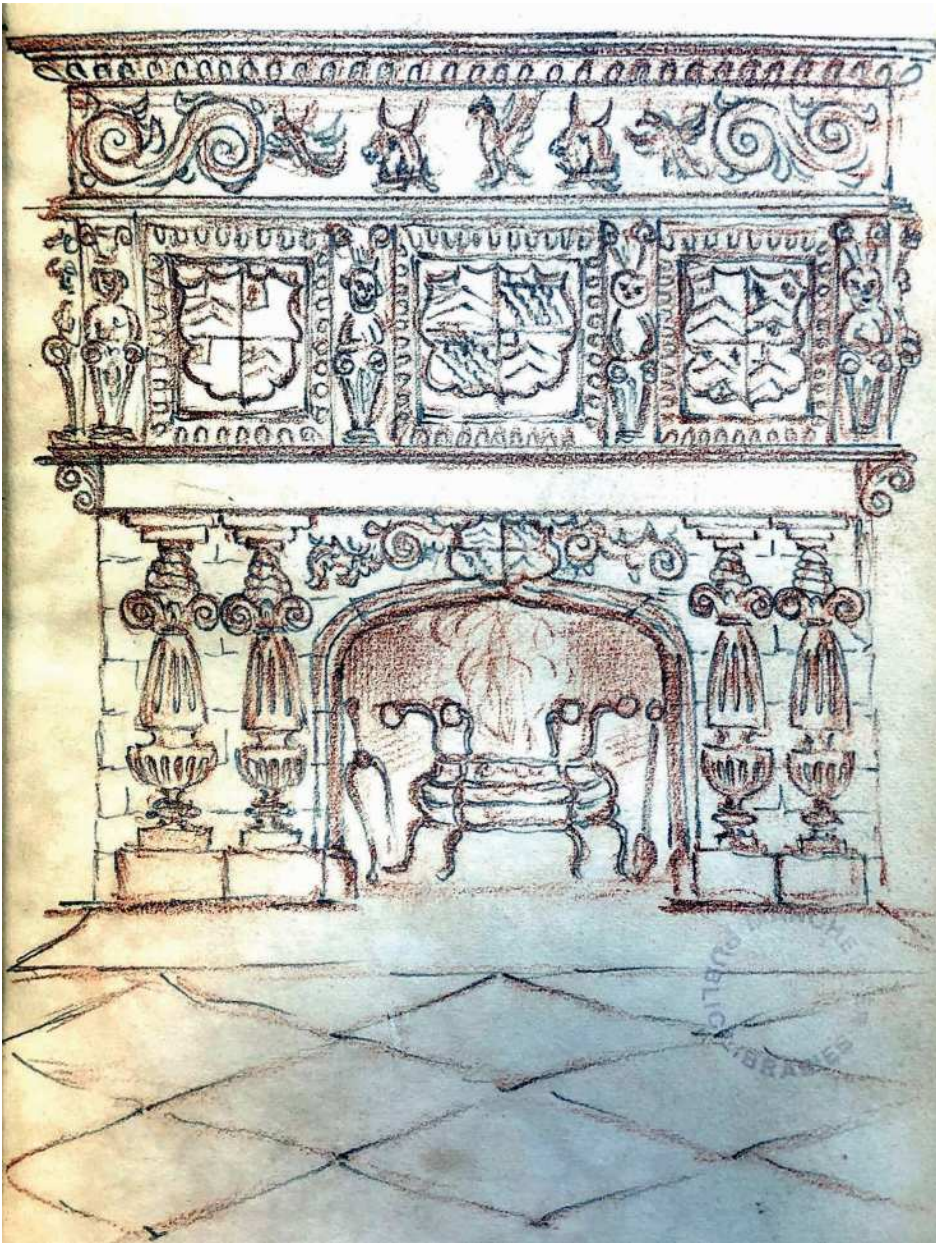


Figure 20: George Shaw, Design for a 'Shaw' Chimneypiece. M175/2/2, f. 79. Courtesy of Oldham Local Studies & Archives.

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which are clearly by Shaw, given their historic forms and personal ancestral heraldry: a *caqueteuse* chair (**Figure 17**) and a bed (**Figure 18**).⁴⁰ Shaw's *caqueteuse* reproduces examples dating to the seventeenth century and earlier such as that now in the collection of the Victoria and Albert Museum in London.⁴¹ Although partially obscured in this now century-old photograph, it is nevertheless clear that Shaw's arms introduced in the house's panelling and on his bookplate were also found on the chair's cresting. The idea, patently, was to produce a chair synonymous with British antiquity and associate it with Shaw's armigerous relations. The same arms were inserted into the bed's headboard seen in Figure 18; set within 'E 16 32 S' (for Shaw), the arms, on this occasion, are located beneath a helm, and, to complete the more ambitious heraldic decoration, the bed's front posts are finished with supporters: a dragon and a crowned lion each bearing a shield, displaying the harp of Ireland and a Tudor rose respectively. Crucially, and upon closer inspection, this bed is also indebted heavily to the Henry VII and Elizabeth of York bed. On the left of the headboard is the same Tudor-style shield bearing the arms of France, and on the right is the arms of England. The shape of the shields and the placement of these arms on the headboard are entirely indebted to the Tudor bed. Much like the interiors that he was hoping to furnish for the Duke of Northumberland and the Earls of Bradford and Derby, Shaw was patently creating his own ancestral furniture, too.

Shaw produced other designs incorporating these adopted arms, including architectural drawings. For instance, on Saturday 27 April 1832 Shaw records his grandfather having come for tea, and that he had later "sketched the opposite design for a gateway into our premises".⁴² This gateway (**Figure 19**), featuring a wonderfully Gothic and asymmetric façade (including a bartizan) depicts proudly the arms borne by his grandfather, and which he incorporated into the *caqueteuse* chair and bed already mentioned. But it was romantic, historic interiors and associated furniture that appear to have been more attractive to Shaw's imagination; a number of designs for such furniture and interiors are spread throughout one of his sketchbooks.⁴³ First is a hall dominated by a large and imposing Gothic staircase surrounded by quartered and impaled coats of arms.⁴⁴ These arms are clearly part of this romantic, Victorian interior, but the shields are not rendered with much detail. A more specific design for the chimneypiece helps clarify the interior's relationship to Shaw and his ancestors (**Figure 20**).⁴⁵ Based upon historic chimneys that he viewed and recorded, such as the early seventeenth-century example at Old Tabley Hall in Cheshire (**Figure 21**) this chimneypiece includes four quartered shields depicting various arms belonging to Shaw's armigerous relations.⁴⁶ The remainder of the chimneypiece is staunchly Elizabethan in style, underscoring the implied antiquity.

⁴⁰ Allen Mellor & Co, "St. Chad's," *Uppermill, Saddleworth, Yorks.: Catalogue of the Valuable Antique & Modern Furniture etc., Including a Very Fine Collection of Old Oak*, (Oldham, 1920), lots 202 ('Old oak wood seat Hall Chair'), p. 11, and lot 547 ('a very fine semi four-post bedstead with elaborated carved headboard introducing finely carved figures, dated 1632'), p. 24.

⁴¹ V&A, W.52-1953 (c. 1600-50), and 740-1895 (c. 1515).

⁴² Oldham Local Studies and Archives, M175/1/3, f. 74; drawing f.75.

⁴³ Oldham Local Studies and Archives, M175/2/2.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, f. 77.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, f. 79.

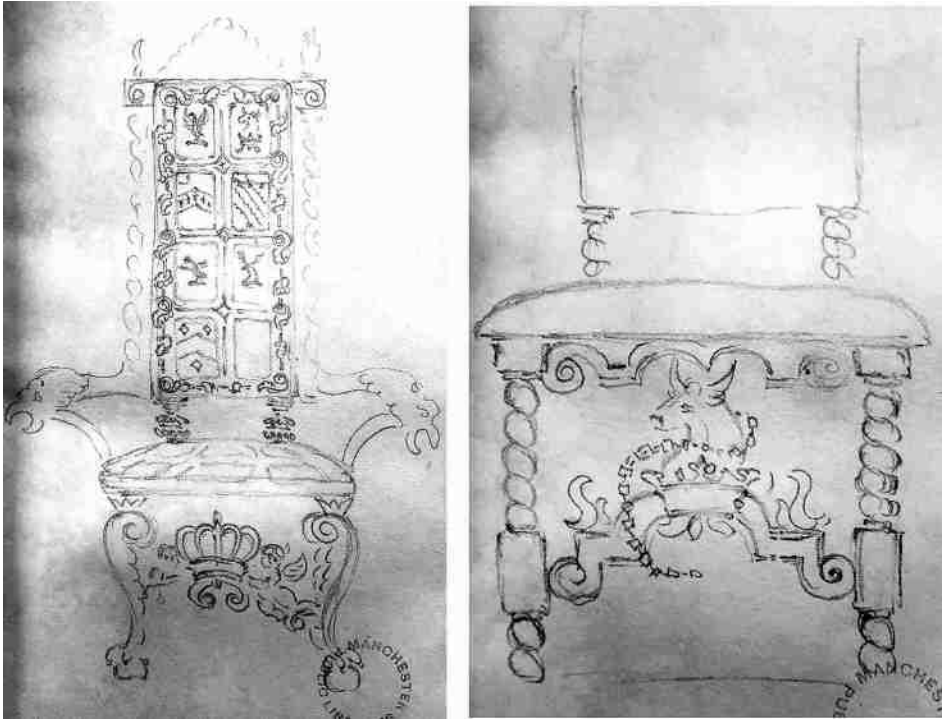
⁴⁶ Oldham Local Studies and Archives, M175/1/2, f. 77; M175/2/3, ff. 47, 49.

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Figure 21: George Shaw, The Chimneypiece at Tabley Old Hall. M175/2/2, f. 47. Courtesy of Oldham Local Studies & Archives.

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Figures 22 and 23: George Shaw, Designs for a 'Shaw' Chairs. M175/2/2, ff. 101,103. Courtesy of Oldham Local Studies & Archives.

Later in the sketchbook is a remarkable series of designs for a chair that should be read in conjunction with this proposed chimneypiece.⁴⁷ The first design gives the most complete overview of the chair and is a curious admixture of different historic types (**Figure 22**). Clearly the most significant influence upon its tall back, prominent scrolled front stretcher, and bowed arms is a type of caned walnut chair popular in the seventeenth century.⁴⁸ It is also heavily indebted to painted hall chairs, such as a lacquered and japanned example now in the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, that were popular in the eighteenth century.⁴⁹ The design's tall back, divided into panels and surrounded by garland scrollwork, displays alternating registers of crests above the relevant coat of arms. These are the same arms that are quartered on the aforementioned chimneypiece's principal shields, while crests are inserted into the chimneypiece's entablature and alternate in the frieze. Like the chimneypiece, these arms belonged to Shaw's ancestral relations. Chairs made after this design would have served, one assumes, as hall chairs for display at St Chad's and match the house's heraldic panelling. Subsequent designs for this chair refine the front stretcher, notably replacing the crown held by two *putti*

⁴⁷ Ibid., ff. 101, 103, 105.

⁴⁸ Christopher Gilbert, *Furniture at Temple Newsam House and Lotherton Hall*, 2 vols (London, 1978), vol.1, pp. 72–73. A later example includes V&A, W.16–1911.

⁴⁹ V&A, W.16A-1962.

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in the first design with the bull's head encircled by an earl's coronet from the arms described above (**Figures 23–24**).⁵⁰ It does not appear that Shaw ever made these pieces of furniture; they are significant, however, in showing the different historic traditions influencing his antiquarian design.⁵¹

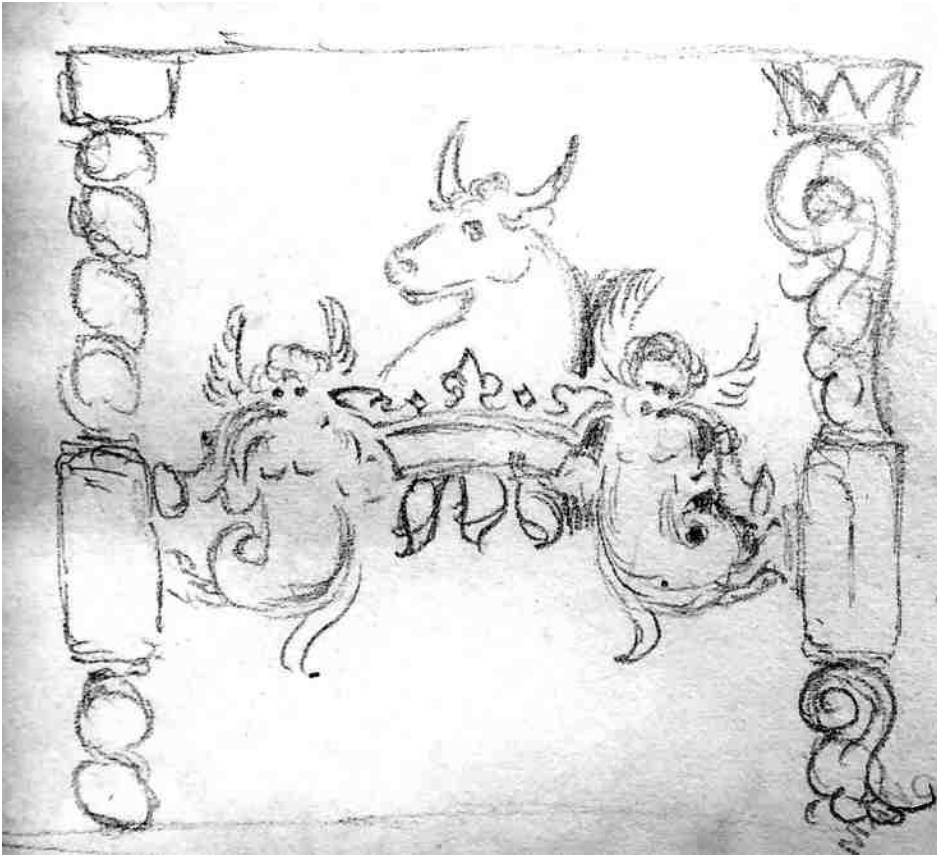


Figure 24: George Shaw, Design for a 'Shaw' Chair. M175/2/2, f. 105. Courtesy of Oldham Local Studies & Archives.

⁵⁰ Oldham Local Studies and Archives, M175/2/2, ff. 103, 105.

⁵¹ I wish to thank Dr Jonathan Foyle and Ian Coulson who introduced me to Shaw and invited me to participate in the Henry VII and Elizabeth of York marriage bed research project. The Leverhulme Trust has supported this research during my time (2016–19) as an Early Career Research Fellow working on forged antiquarian material culture in Georgian and Early Victorian Britain.