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CONTENTS

ARTICLES

BOOK REVIEWS

A MEDIEVAL CRESCENTIC ARMORIAL HARNESS PENDANT FROM BURSTWICK, YORKSHIRE: ROMAN ANTECEDENTS AND ROMANESQUE PARALLELS

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Abstract

A medieval crescentic armorial harness pendant, found near the east coast of Yorkshire, is unparalleled in England but finds comparable examples on the Continent. Crescent-shaped pendants have been given dates from Roman to medieval, and diagnostic features on examples from both periods recorded on the Portable Antiquities Database are noted herein.

Discovery and context

The armorial harness pendant which forms the subject of this note was found in August 2022 by a metal-detectorist in Burstwick, in the East Riding of Yorkshire.[1] The findspot lies *c*. 2 km to the north of the village and site of Burstwick Castle, and *c*. 9 km inland from the much eroded (and eroding) Holderness coast, which runs south from Flamborough Head down to Spurn Head at the mouth of the River Humber. The latter is near the site of the lost medieval port of Ravenspurn, now under the North Sea.[2] Around 13 km to the west of Burstwick is Kingston upon Hull, which became the foremost east-coast port in medieval England, trading mainly with Scotland, Scandinavia, the Baltic, and northern Europe.[3]

The pendant

The copper-alloy pendant is cast in the form of an inverted crescent[4] with an integral suspension-loop and a double-concave lower/inner edge and damaged points (**Figures 1** and **2a**). The face of the crescent has the remains of champlevé enamelled decoration comprising three shields, each placed on a blue-enamelled roundel, with traces of engraved oblique cross-hatching on the remaining, unenamelled, face. The pointed triangular form of the shields was a particular characteristic of the late twelfth- and early thirteenth-century.[5] The surface of the metal is very corroded, but some fragments of

[1] Portable Antiquities Scheme database number (hereafter PAS) YORYM-143F57 (found at TA 21799 29624). The pendant was found by Mr Paul Wright and recorded on the PAS database by Mrs Rebecca Griffiths.

[2] Henry Bolingbroke landed here in 1399 on his way to dethrone Richard II.

[3] For a comprehensive overview of the extensive trading links and development of material culture around the North Sea littoral during the Middle Ages see B. Ayers *The German Ocean: Medieval Europe around the North Sea* (Sheffield, 2016).

[4] Heraldically also known as a *crescent pendant* (*pendu* in French).

[5] G. Grazebrook, *The dates of variously-shaped shields with coincident dates and examples* (Liverpool, 1890), pp, 12-19, Plate 1, no 1.

Figure 1: the pendant with its three enamelled shields, PAS YORYM-143F57, for scale see figure 2.

gilding survive, on both faces.[6] Red enamel occupies the upper third of each of the three shields, with the apparently plain lower part, somewhat pitted and decayed, having no identifiable charges. The blazon is therefore apparently *Or a chief gules,* or–possibly *Argent a chief gules* if the arms were originally silvered. The possible significance of these arms is discussed below. The pendant is 40.5mm long, 38.2mm wide, 2.7mm thick and weighs 8.8g.

Continental parallels

The combined form and decoration of the Burstwick pendant is exceptional. No other English example of a crescent-shaped pendant bearing arms is known to the writer.[7] None is present in his published survey of *c*. 250 pieces of medieval armorial horse

[6] There are also some patches of white paper fibres –presumably packing material– adhering to the surface, which unfortunately were not removed before the photograph was taken.

[7] The crescent itself is a common heraldic device. For many arms displaying crescents and other related lunar forms see M. Van de Cruys *De maan, de Wassenaar en de maanroos: Een heraldische beschouwing van een hemellichaam* Heraldicum Disputationes – Jubileumuitgave (Wijnegem, 2015).

furniture from Norfolk,[8] nor in Sir John Baker's collection of *c*. 2000 examples of similar armorial equestrian fittings,[9] and none was found in a recent search of pendants and other fittings recorded on the PAS online database.[10]

The Burstwick pendant finds its most useful parallels on the Continent–in Denmark and in Germany. In 2003 Anne Pedersen of The National Museum of Denmark published a gilt and enamelled copper-alloy pendant of similar form to Burstwick- crescentic with double-cusped lower edge, but of finer execution (**Figure 2b**).[11] The Danish pendant had been "found amongst old scrap iron in a smithy" in Jørlunde, in northern Jutland. It is decorated with a scheme which is either proto-armorial or armorial, comprising a central roundel bearing an eagle displayed, set between a pair of flanking wyverns.[12] Art historical parallels for the find led Pedersen to suggest a date of manufacture in the second half of the twelfth century or first half of the thirteenth century. One of the parallels cited is another double-cusped crescentic pendant with enamelled zoomorphic decoration, which is around twice the size of the two examples discussed above (**Figure 2c**). It was discovered on excavations in Neuenburg, in Sachsen-Anhalt, Germany, in a secure archaeological context dating to the second half of the twelfth century. The pendant displays two fabulous confronted long-eared quadrupeds, their heads touching, both with upward-pointing wings which end in a long-eared dragon-like head. The three points at the lower edge of the pendant end (or ended) in roundels, the larger central one decorated with a possible lion passant regardant to sinister, and the surviving left-hand roundel decorated with a quatrefoil. The right-hand roundel is missing.[13]

Crescentic pendants–Roman, and Medieval

It can sometimes be difficult to differentiate between Roman crescentic (or lunate) pendants and medieval[14] crescentic examples.[15] Roman pendants may display some of the following characteristics: a circular suspension-loop,[16] sometimes collared[17] or

[8] Steven Ashley *Medieval Armorial Horse Furniture in Norfolk* (Dereham, 2002), or amongst at least as many examples again, discovered since publication (but before all finds were added to the PAS database), which were drawn and recorded by the writer and are now lodged in the archives of the Norfolk Historic Environment Record (www.norfolk.gov.uk).

[9] Or in a further 1000 or so recorded in a separate database (personal communication Sir John Baker). Selected finds from his collection are discussed in John Baker 'The earliest armorial harness pendants', *CoA*, vol. 2, pt. 1, no. 229 (2015), pp. 1-24 with plates 1 and 2, and 'Heraldic Insights from Small Metal Artefacts 1250–1350' in Nigel Ramsay (ed.) *Heralds and Heraldry in the Middle Ages* (Donington, forthcoming).

[10] https://finds.org.uk/database, consulted June 2023.

[11] A. Pedersen "Fundet mellem gammelt jærn I en smedje…." in P. Grinder-Hansen (ed.), *Arvesølvet: Studier fra Nationalmuseet tilegnet Fritse Lindahl 2003*, pp. 7-16 with English summary at pp. 225-6.

[12] The fields appear to contain the remains of blue enamel. The bird, beasts, and borders to the roundels and crescent retain traces of gilding in the incised detail. NB the schematic hatched drawing of this pendant (**Figure 2b**) does not follow later heraldic conventions (i.e. Petra Sancta).

[13] Pedersen op. cit., p. 11, fig. 5. The decoration on the missing roundel is likely to have mirrored that on the surviving flanking roundel.

[14] Broadly dating from the mid-late eleventh century to the fourteenth century.

[15] Demonstrated in print by the misdating of a double-cusped crescentic probable mid-late eleventh- to twelfth-century pendant with zoomorphic decoration and animal-head terminals as 'late Roman' (T.D. Kendrick *Anglo-Saxon Art to AD 900* (London, 1938), pp. 29, plate xv, no. 3).

[16] PAS: SUSS-F28597.

[17] AS: PUBLIC-FA4C64.

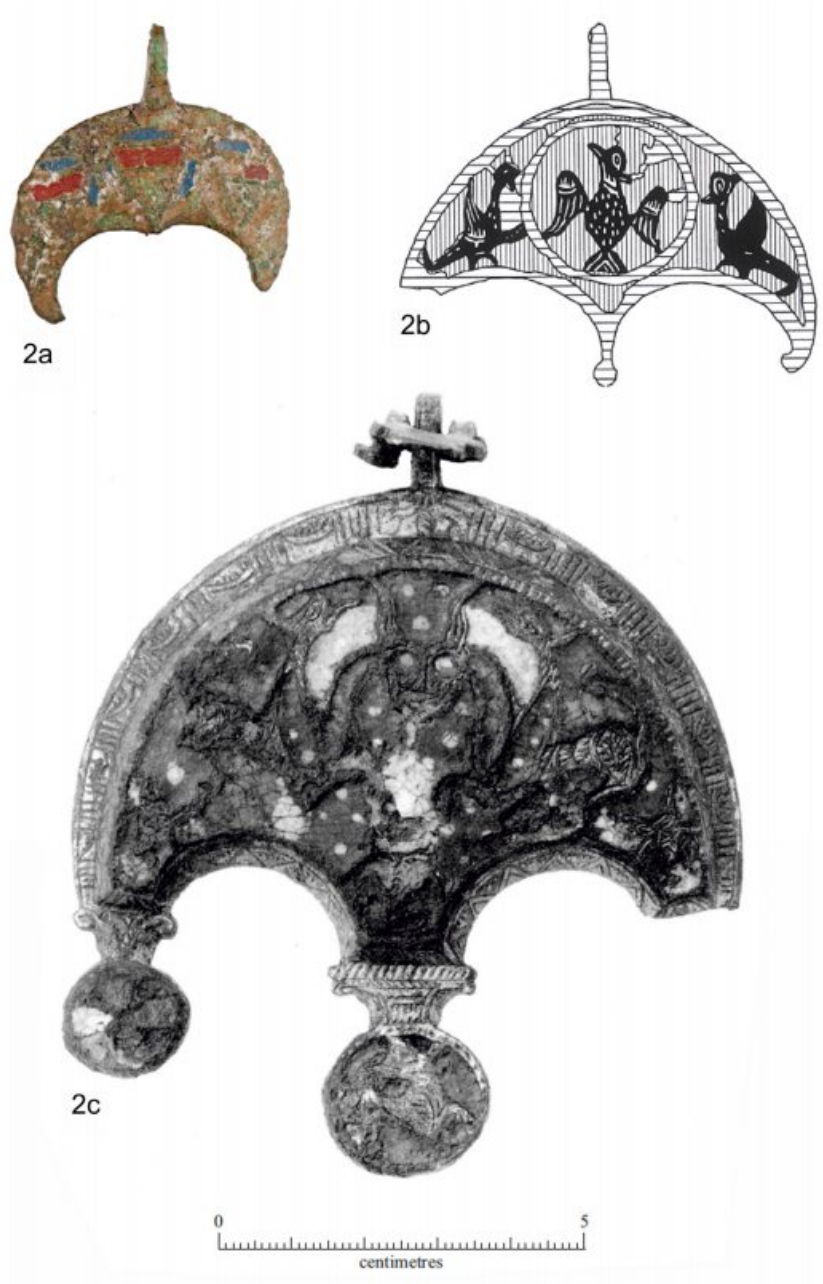

Figure 2. 2a: harness pendant from Burstwick, Yorkshire; 2b: harness pendant from Jørlunde, Denmark, after Pedersen 2003 (Schematic reconstruction: Thomas Bredsdorf, The National Museum of Denmark); 2c: harness pendant from Neuenburg, in Sachsen-Anhalt, Germany, after Pedersen 2003 (Photograph: Landesamt für Denkmalpflege Sachsen-Anhalt). Scale 1:1.

projecting from a sub-rectangular moulding or platform.[18] The inverted crescents are often closed with the points ending in a knop[19] or knops[20] where conjoined. Some have a perforation at the mid-point of the lower/inner edge.[21] Occasionally the face of the pendant is decorated with enamelled cells,[22] or punched annulets.[23] It should also be noted that the surface colour of Roman copper-alloy objects recovered from the ground usually appears a distinctive pale olive-green colour due to the combination of alloys used at the time.

On medieval pendants the suspension-loop is usually flattened on the reverse[24] (but not invariably[25]), the inverted crescent has open points,[26] and the face is usually gilded.[27] At least one example has points in the form of stylised animal heads.[28] Another has a serrated lower edge and engraved interrupted rocker-arm decoration on its face.[29] Two further crescentic medieval pendants should also be mentioned here: both are elaborate, double-cusped, but with an exaggerated central point projecting from the lower edge in the form of a trefoil or elaborate trefoil, creating an m-shape in a similar manner to a group of medieval buckle plates, where it was suggested that the m-shaped form might refer to the Virgin Mary.[30]

The apparent similarity between some Roman and medieval pendants is demonstrated by the medieval Burstwick pendant and its contemporary Continental parallels. All three pendants have a double-cusped lower edge, a form paralleled by three crescentic pendants illustrated on the PAS Database which are convincingly assigned to the Roman period.[31] Nevertheless, the Burstwick example and its Continental parallels can be confidently ascribed to the twelfth and thirteenth centuries- they are not Roman, but 'Romanesque.'

The Arms

At first sight the potential for armorial identification does not look promising. Although only one individual is known to have borne *Or a chief gules*, the DBA lists twelve

[18] PAS: NLM-C1D22D.
[19] PAS: LEIC-CE3F62.
[20] PAS: WMID-2A5C72.
[21] PAS: LVPL-6E70B4. See M.C. Bishop and J.C.N. Coulston, *Roman Military Equipment: From the Punic Wars to the fall of Rome* (Oxford, 2006), p. 120, figure 70, no. 4.
[22] PAS: SWYOR-C99474. See S. James *Excavations at Dura-Europos 1928-1937: Final Report VII, The Arms and Armour and other Military Equipment* (Oxford, 2010), pp. 88-9, fig. 41, no. 192.
[23] PAS: YORYM-CDFBDB. Although punched annulets are more often found on twelfth- and early thirteenth-century horse furniture, see Ashley (2002), op. cit., p. 6, fig. 6, nos. 6-7, 9-13 for example.
[24] PAS: HAMP-DCF864.
[25] PAS: NMS-85810F.
[26] PAS: BERK-6F20A6.
[27] PAS: SWYOR-6FC678.
[28] PAS: NMS-574716. Animal-head terminals are commonplace on twelfth-century small finds, see Steven Ashley 'Anglo-Norman Elite Objects from Castle and Countryside' in J.A. Davies, A. Riley, J-M. Levesque, and C. Lapiche (edd.), *Castles and the Anglo-Norman World* (Oxford, 2016), pp. 281-298, where a variety of examples is illustrated throughout.
[29] PAS: NMS-85810F.
[30] PAS: SF-358227; NMS-4BB793. See A. Rogerson and S. Ashley 'A distinctive medieval buckle-type with a bird- or M-shaped plate' *Medieval Archaeology*, (2017), pp. 395-98, at p. 397.
[31] PAS: SWYOR-B03244; NMS-816D1A; PUBLIC-FA4C64.

medieval possibilities for *Argent a chief gules*.[32] It is possible to eliminate half of these quite quickly,[33] leaving six (giving a total of seven) requiring more detailed evaluation. The findings on these seven are detailed in the appendix. If a horse pendant is found in a location where people might have congregated, or beside a highway, then its owner might have come from any part of the country, but if found in a more remote place then the first question to be addressed is whether any possible bearer lived in the vicinity of the find. The location at Burstwick is somewhat off the beaten track.[34] The only families with any local connection thrown up by the heraldic investigation are those of Champagne and Hercy, the former in the personage of Piers de Champagne in the late thirteenth century, the latter in the time of Hugh Hercy in the early fifteenth century. The fifteenth century seems stylistically too late, and thus we are left with only Sir Peter de Champagne, who bore *Argent a chief gules*, as a likely local owner. The question then arises whether the life of this individual might potentially shed any light on the object.

Sir Peter de Champagne (d. 1296)

Sir Peter held knights' fees both as a tenant in chief of the crown in Lincolnshire and as a retainer of the king's brother Edmund Plantagenet, Earl of Cornwall, in Dorset. He was granted free warren for his manors of Saxby, Barrow-upon-Humber, Scawby and Dunham in Lincolnshire in 1267.[35] Here he had a total of two knights' fees, while at Shapwick in Dorset he held two and a quarter fees from the Earl.[36] Barrow-on-Humber is close to Burstwick, lying just across the river Humber. Moreover, Sir Piers worked as an itinerant justice of gaol delivery in many counties from 1289 onwards, including in Yorkshire. On 24 February 1270 he was granted letters of protection for four years to accompany the Prince Edward (later Edward I) to the Holy Land on the Ninth Crusade. He had not personally taken the cross, and was there to protect his lord, for which he would have received payment. It must have been the greatest adventure of his life. The Prince departed for France on 20th August 1270 and travelled to Acre via Tunis, Sicily and Cyprus. He returned in September 1272, visiting Sicily, southern Italy, Rome, Orvieto, Milan and Paris on his way back to England to be crowned king.[37] Sir Peter was called upon again by Edward I for military service in Wales in 1277, and accompanied his monarch to Gascony and Spain in 1286. On all these expeditions a fellow traveller was the baron Sir John de St John (d. 1302), lord of Basing (who coincidentally bore *Argent on a chief gules two rowels or*); the two men were sent to Aquitaine on a final mission together in 1293. St John was close to the king and a trusted lieutenant.[38]

As to Sir Peter's antecedents, his arms indicate a Breton ancestry, as the Champagne family of Brittany, which included a twelfth century Crusader, bore the arms *Ermine a*

[32] DBA, vol. 3, pp. 3-5.

[33] Durward, Lasser and Menzies being Scottish; Vivon a repetition (of Fors); Popham an incomplete blazon of a well-known family, and the Templars an error as the Templar banner was correctly *Argent a chief sable*, as was listed many times by Matthew Paris.

[34] Although, as noted above, not far from the site of the lost medieval port of Ravenspurn.

[35] Charles Moor, *The knights of Edward I*, 5 vols, Harl. Soc. vols 80-4 (London 1929-32), vol. 1, pp. 190-1.

[36] CIPM 1291-1300, no. 360 and no. 423 (p. 288).

[37] Michael Prestwich, *Edward I* (New Haven, 1997), pp. 73-85.

[38] GEC vol 11, pp. 323-5; More, op. cit., vol. 4, pp. 175-7.

chief gules.[39] Sir Peter de Champagne would have been able to draw upon influences from many parts of Europe, and even the Holy Land, and perhaps the highly distinctive horse pendants represented by this example were intended to memorialise his travels.

Conclusions

The crescentic medieval harness pendant from Burstwick, with its enamelled armorial decoration, is unparalleled in England, and its exemplar may lie somewhere in Northern Europe or Scandinavia. However, in contrast to the vast and steadily growing corpus of examples of armorial horse furniture in England,[40] found by metal-detectorists and reported to the Portable Antiquities Scheme,[41] in many European countries metal-detecting is either prohibited or very strictly controlled. Consequently, there is far less Continental material available for study. That said, there are exceptions- The Netherlands does permit responsible detecting and now has an online database like the PAS,[42] and Norway is following suit, although, at present, only the Southwest Jutland Museums' archaeological collection is available online. [43]

Elsewhere, a small group of five fourteenth-century crescentic pendants and mounts from Finland and Gotland (Sweden) was published in 2013.[44] Two of these artefacts were found by Finnish metal-detectorists, but the most chronologically useful example was part of the Amunde Hoard, found on Gotland and datable to *c*. 1361.[45] Although crescentic, they are unrelated to the pendants discussed above, as they take the form of 'The Man in the Moon', that is, where the moon has an anthropomorphic face. Evidence for the manufacture of undecorated medieval crescentic harness pendants is provided by an early fourteenth-century bronze matrix, discovered on the site of St Olaf's Church in Lödöse, Sweden.[46] Confirmation of the method of employment of such fittings can be seen on thirteenth-century bronze aquamaniles, as on an example from the church of St Mary, in Vä, Southern Sweden, where crescentic pendants are shown suspended from the breast-band of the horse. The production of aquamaniles of this type has been traced to Northern Germany.[47]

Lastly, some useful work has been done on old European museum collections of

[39] Steen Clemmensen, *Ordinary of Medieval Armorials*, Champagne 10, online at www.armorial.dk; Pol Potier de Courcy, *Nobiliare et Armorial de Bretagne*, 2 vols (Mayenne, 2000), vol. 1, p. 217. This family should not be confused either with the Counts of Champagne in France or with the Barons of Champagne Parcé in Maine and Anjou.

[40] And to a lesser extent, Scotland, and Wales. For England see for example: Ashley (2002), Baker (2015, and forthcoming); J. Goodall and T. Woodcock 'Armorial and other pendants, studs and ornaments of the medieval period, in the light of recent metal-detector finds' *Antiquaries J*ournal (1991), pp. 239-47; and N. Griffiths 'Harness pendants and associated fittings' in J. Clarke (ed.), *The Medieval Horse and its Equipment*, (London, 1995), pp. 61-71.

[41] Unfortunately, an unknown quantity of material is found and not reported.

[42] https://portable-antiquities.nl/pan/#/public, consulted June 2023.

[43] http://sol.sydvestjyskemuseer.dk, consulted June 2023, producing one broken undecorated possibly crescentic medieval harness pendant.

[44] V. Immonen 'Connecting Things through the Visual Arts: medieval crescent moon pendants as horse ornaments' *Norwegian Archaeological Review* (2013), vol. 46, no. 2, pp. 175-193.

[45] Immonen, op. cit., p. 179.

[46] Immonen, op. cit., p. 182.

[47] Immonen, op. cit., p. 187, who illustrates a similar thirteenth-century bronze from Northern Germany in the collections of the Metropolitan Museum of Art (fig. 9).

Medieval horse furniture. In 1994 María Luisa Martín Ansón published a catalogue of the 136 pieces of Spanish horse furniture held in the Museu Frederic Marès in Barcelona,[48] and more recently, Céline Champcourt catalogued and discussed the 179 mostly armorial pendants, mounts and other harness fittings collected at the beginning of the twentieth century by Count Raoul de Rochebrune, now in the Musee Dobree in Nantes, as a basis for her dissertation.[49] This latter assemblage includes a fourteenth or fifteenth-century Spanish inverted crescentic pendant, the curved arms of the crescent springing from a central shield, with gilt and enamelled decoration.[50] Other French, Italian, and Spanish examples of armorial horse furniture are present in British collections, the Victoria and Albert Museum, and the British Museum, but await publication.[51]

Appendix: armorial investigation[52]

Or a chief gules
1.Thomas FITZSIMON occurs in rolls from the time of Richard II. He was retained by John of Gaunt circa 1372-82[53] but did not continue into the service of Gaunt's successor as Duke of Lancaster, his son Henry IV, and presumably died in the reign of Richard II. Clemmensen in his account of Willement's Roll places him in Gloucestershire in the affinity of Lord Grey of Ruthin.[54]

Argent a chief gules
2. Piers de CHAMPAGNE occurs in rolls of Edward I.[55] He died in 1296 leaving two daughters as coheirs and was based at Barrow-upon Humber and Saxilby in Lincolnshire. Barrow is just across the Humber from Burstwick where the pendant was found.

3. Matthew COLUMBERS occurs in Glover's Roll from the reign of Henry III.[56] He was based in Hampshire and Wiltshire and died in 1272 leaving a brother and heir Michael who died without issue in 1284.[57] This family is not known to have held land anywhere near Burstwick.

[48] M.L. Martín Ansón *Catàleg de xapes de guarniment*, Fons del Museu Frederic Marès 2 (Barcelona, 1994). Many of the pieces are armorial, but none is crescentic.
[49] C. Champcourt 'Pendants, plaques de harnais et autres petits objets métalliques, médiévaux' réunis par le Compte Raoul de Rochebrune entre 1904 et 1924, conserves au musée Thomas Dobrée à Nantes' (École du Louvre, Mai 2017) (Unpublished).
[50] Champcourt, op. cit., pp. 87-8, cat. no. 930.1.101.
[51] The writer is grateful to Anne Pedersen for an offprint of her paper on the Jørlunde pendant, and for permission to reproduce images from the publication; to Andrew Hall for editing the images; and to Sir John Baker and Andrew Rogerson for their helpful comments on this note.
[52] The author wishes to thank Dr Paul Fox, for his assistance with this aspect of the enquiry, and also with the biography of Sir Peter de Champagne given above.
[53] Sidney Armitage-Smith, *John of Gaunt* (London, 1964), p. 441.
[54] Steen Clemmensen, *Willement's Roll of Arms* (Farum, 2008), online at www.armorial.dk.
[55] Gerard J. Brault, *Aspilogia 3 Rolls of Arms of Edward I (1272-1307)*, 2 vols (Woodbridge, 1997), vol. 2, pp. 97-8.
[56] Hugh Stanford London, 'Glover's Roll c. 1253-8', in Sir Anthony Wagner (ed.), *Aspilogia 2, Rolls of Arms of Henry III* (London, 1967), p. 153.
[57] Sir William Dugdale, *The Baronage of England*, 2 vols (London, 1675), vol. 1, p. 633.

4. William de FORS, is also in Glover's Roll.[58] This individual was later confused in armorials with the Earls of Albemarle of the same name, who bore different arms. He was of Vivonne in Poitou and Chewton in Somerset and died in 1259 leaving four daughters as coheirs. His wife was Maud Ferrers (d.1299) daughter of William Ferrers, Earl of Derby, and widow of Simon de Kyme (d. 1248), who did not hold any known part of the barony of Kyme. This is likely to be an incomplete blazon as the family of Vivonne in Poitou bore *Ermine a chief gules*.

5. Hugh HERCY sealed with these arms in 1428.[59] The tinctures are ascribed to 'Hugh Herty' in the fourteenth century Thomas Jenyns' Book. Hugh Hercy is described in the 1428 deed as being the son of Katherine, widow of Marmaduke Constable, knight. This was Marmaduke Constable of Flamborough (d. 1377), sheriff of Yorkshire 1366-7. Flamborough is just north of Holderness, and the Constable family held widely in the peninsula. Hugh de Hercy held Grove in Nottinghamshire, as his ancestors had done from the thirteenth century, and his descendants continued to do so until the seventeenth century.[60] A tomb of Hugh Hercy in Grove church dating 1455 carries these arms.

6. Sir Thomas SAUNFORD is ascribed these arms in the Carlisle Roll of 1334 and Powell's Roll of c. 1350. This cannot be Thomas Saunford or Sampford of Drayton in Hampshire who acceded in 1289 and died in 1327, leaving a son and heir Richard who died the same year. It must be Thomas de Saunford or Sampford 'of Suffolk' who was summoned to a Great Council in 1324 and summoned to fight in Guyenne in 1325.[61] The arms of this knight are not listed in *Suffolk arms*, [62]and it has not been possible to locate his holdings in Suffolk; moreover, when Thomas de Saunford, knight owed money in 1344 it was to be levied on his property in Middlesex.[63] His primary holding was at Harefield in Middlesex, where he held a manor in 1349 which subsequently passed through his daughter and heir to the Swanland family.[64]

7. WORSLEY 'of Yorkshire', so described in the Military Roll of c. 1446, but this must be a later interpolation as the Worsleys who bore these arms were a Lancashire family in the medieval era, anciently based at Worsley.[65] They only moved to Yorkshire in Tudor times. Corder ascribes the same arms to Worsley of Woodbridge in Suffolk, which is another post-medieval connection.[66]

[58] Hugh Stanford London, op. cit., p. 153.
[59] Lewis C Loyd and Doris Mary Stenton, *Sir Christopher Hatton's Book of Seals*, Northants Rec Soc vol. 15 (1950), no. 489.
[60] John Throsby (ed.) *Thoroton's history of Nottinghamshire, republished, with large additions,* 3 vols (London 1797), vol. 3, pp. 260-264.
[61] Francis Palgrave, *Parliamentary writs and writs of military summons*, 2 vols in 4 (London, 1827-34).
[62] Joan Corder, *A dictionary of Suffolk arms*, Suffolk Record Society vol, 7 (1965).
[63] CCR 1343-46, p. 350.
[64] William Frederick Vernon, *Notes on the parish of Harefield* (London, 1872), p. 26.
[65] VCH Lancashire, vol. 4, pp. 376-92.
[66] Corder, op. cit., p. 231.