The Coat of Arms

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The Heraldry Society is an educational charity. Its purpose is to promote greater understanding and appreciation of heraldry and its related subjects. The society organises lectures, study days, congresses, dinners and other social activities. It offers a course in heraldry leading to examination for a diploma. It publishes a range of source material at modest cost. Members receive the *Coat of Arms* and the quarterly *Heraldry Gazette*.

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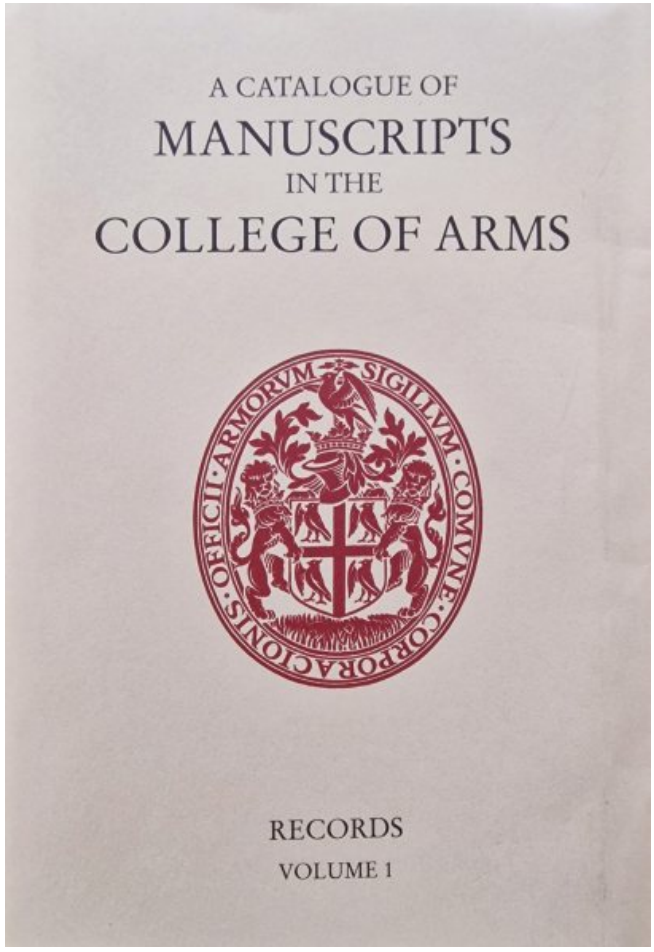
BOOK REVIEWS

Robert Yorke, *A Catalogue of Manuscripts in the College of Arms: Records. Volume 1*. London: College of Arms, 2023. 739+lxv pages, 32 colour plates. Hardcover ISBN 978-0-9506-980-3-8. £60.



What this long-anticipated reference work supplies first and foremost is a name index of all the families, persons, and organisations who are named anywhere in the Tudor Visitation documents, but it goes so much further than this. Each name is given its absolute context within a meticulous page by page analysis of every manuscript, thereby permitting the reader to most effectively target his own research requirements. This book completely transforms the accessibility of a whole tranche of College of Arms manuscripts for those working both within and without the College, greatly facilitating comparisons with the corpus of related Visitation material to be found in the British Library and other archives. The volume does not include the Tudor 'proto-Visitations' of 1498 and 1513 which, together with another of c.1480 are included in CA MSS M3 and M4, already catalogued by Campbell and Steer.

The earliest visitation material detailed within the volume is that gathered by Thomas Benolt, Clarenceux (d.1534) and Thomas Tonge, Norroy (d.1536). The records of the former have been briefly summarised by Ramsay, but Yorke provides us with a detailed breakdown of the majority of the Benolt visitation material from the early 1530s under D.13, H.7, H.18 and H.20.[1] Another precious early record is Tonge's Visitation of the North 1530–1 which is considered under D.4. This manuscript includes material gathered from important state occasions back to the burial of the Earl of Salisbury in 1463, and these are very plausibly events in which Tonge participated as a junior herald.

Previously the only available nominal list of family names from the Visitations was that provided in Cecil Humphery-Smith's *Armigerous Ancestors* (Canterbury, 1997) a list running to 545 pages. Many of these families actually disclaimed their right to bear arms, as is clearly designated in Humphery-Smith's index. This earlier index provided an entry point into Sims' *Index of Pedigrees contained in the Heralds' Visitations and other manuscripts in the British Museum*, which is freely available to download online. On its own Sims is a cumbersome research tool because it is necessary to search through every county for a given name. It might be imagined that this does not matter too much if it is known where a family lives, but frequent changes of residence by gentry families can make it hard to predict in which county Visitation the earliest pedigree might appear. Yorke's new index actually makes the British Library archive more readily accessible by linking families to specific Visitations.

What distinguishes the College's collection of Visitations material from that in the British Library is that the former is canonical, with the greater proportion having been in continual use by the heralds since the manuscripts were first deposited in the Heralds' archive in the sixteenth century. Of the 67 items listed, no less than 47 appear in a 1618 catalogue. We can find in the College's records many of the original rough sheets that were drawn up at the very times when the heralds rode out. The College has also retained a great many original 'office copies', these being the final record of the Visitation after a proportion of the rough sheets were weeded out. The weeding out process is somewhat mysterious, but a disinclination by clients to pay the necessary fees is likely to have been a significant factor. The business of a Visitation began with the gathering of the names of the larger freeholders from the county sheriff, these being the men with land or property worth £100 a year or more. The lists were divided up into the hundreds or wapentakes, and the freeholders were summoned to the main towns of each hundred to account for themselves. The evidence for these processes as revealed by the Visitation documents themselves is one of the many topics considered in the 65-page introduction. The peerage were not required to participate, being under the direct authority of Garter King of Arms, but notwithstanding quite a few peerage families have been listed in the Visitations, and sometimes the heralds used their residences as regional bases.

An enterprising initiative was introduced in 1558, from which year those who were either not prepared to pay the fees, or were otherwise deemed to be ineligible, had to

[1] Nigel Ramsay, 'Clarenceux King of Arms and the Office of Arms', in *Corpus of British Medieval Library Catalogues*, 14: *Hospitals, Towns and the Professions*, ed. N. Ramsay and J. Willoughby (London, 2009), pp. 169–202.

disclaim their right to bear arms at the local market cross. For the more substantial yeomen farmers this would not have been troublesome, but for any who aspired to be counted as gentlemen the ritual can only have been deeply humiliating. Not surprisingly the attitude towards the visiting heralds could be hostile, and the records reveal that Cooke was disrespected by a particularly rough lot of local citizens in Shropshire (MS G.15) many of whom were summoned to appear before the Earl Marshal's court, presumably to face a fine for contempt.

The catalogue, comprising 471 pages, is highly meticulous, and in addition to describing every aspect of each volume in detail, comments or marginalia of historical significance have been noted. Attention has been drawn to sections of the Visitations where heraldry has been recorded from churches and houses, and all such have been included in the subject catalogue under 'church notes.'

In order to compile section two of the book, 'a complete list of Tudor Visitation Manuscripts by County', it was necessary for the author to inspect the related manuscript material in other archives. The end result of this enormous labour has been the creation of a clear and succinct summary of an entire class of documents, which is of inestimable value. For the first time the College of Arms material is placed alongside that in the British Library and elsewhere in a manner which is both detailed and easy to comprehend. The names of later owners and copyists have been provided, with further information on these individuals given in Appendix III. The lists will provide a solid foundation for future investigations into how and why selected Visitations were copied, and to what uses they were put. The list reveals that some of the Visitations were copied a great many times. These include the 1583 Visitation of Staffordshire, with three later copies in the College archive plus another 25 in other repositories. The 1561 Visitation of Suffolk spawned six later copies now housed in the College, and 19 others which are elsewhere.

Most of the Visitations have been published in some format, and most of these publications are now available online, but none of these was taken directly from the College's collection. Yorke has listed all of the later copies and related them to the College manuscripts from which they derive. Sections 1 and 2 taken together will make comprehension and analysis of the diaspora of material much more straightforward. York's Section 2 in its masterful handling quite supersedes, so far as sixteenth century is concerned, Humphery-Smith's own lists of the Visitations by county as provided in Section II of *Armigerous Ancestors*, but the latter will remain useful until the College is able to catalogue its seventeenth-century Visitations.

The relevance of *Records Volume 1* is by no means confined to the sixteenth century, as we have just seen. Some of the manuscripts catalogued contain important seventeenth-century additions, a good example being MS H.2. This comprises Robert Cooke's contemporary, but incomplete records of the 1574 Visitation of Kent. A much better record in the hand of Cooke's deputy Robert Glover came to the attention of Sir William Dugdale in 1677, and he had it copied and interleaved with Cooke's own version. The 'Out of Series' section of manuscripts which are catalogued in the final part of Section 1 are of seventeenth-century date, but of considerable importance. These include an early seventeenth-century copy of Robert Glover's *Book of Entrances* which include many of Glover's 1584-5 church notes from Yorkshire; and *Trefoil Dugdale* which includes Dugdale's copy of Tonge's 1532-3 Visitation of Lancashire.

Of the appendices, the first lists the surviving Visitation commissions between 1530 and 1603, while the second provides a chronological list of the Visitations. The latter must be considered as important due to misunderstandings which have arisen when

editors of Visitations have taken the date when a manuscript was copied as the date of a Visitation. Appendix IV delineates the contents of the non-Visitation manuscripts which sit alongside them in the same shelves. They contain a diversity of subject material, and amongst them, some church notes. All is rounded off with three indices by the author (families and persons, places, subjects), the first two of which, as already stated, are the essential raison d'être for the whole project. Attempting to read the whole volume is not a task for the faint hearted, but has been rewarded with some hidden gems. Not least among these are the pages summarised under the subject index as illegitimacy (see also concubines). One is left wanting to know rather more about William Dakyns, fl. 1580-98 'notorious imposter and forger of pedigrees', listed in Appendix III.

This work must be regarded as an essential source for all scholars of medieval and early modern heraldry and genealogy.

Paul A. Fox

Kevin Greig and Gordon Casely (edd.), *A Festschrift for George Anthony Maxwell*, Palfrey Press, 2023. 387pp, colour illustrations throughout. Hardcover ISBN 978-1-960736-00-0. £25.

This Royal size (234x156 mm) hard-cover book is a labour of love by three well-known members of the heraldic world. Edited by two of the late Anthony Maxwell's friends, Kevin Greig (artist and antiquarian) and Gordon Casely (journalist, heraldist, and piper), and published by Brady Brim-DeForest (publisher, antiquarian, and patron of the heraldic arts) via his Palfrey Press, the volume has been produced in honour of the heraldic work of the late George Anthony Maxwell. Greig also designed the silver-embossed black cover with, at the top, the arms of the current Lord Lyon, Dr Joseph J. Morrow, the bonnet badge of Clan Maxwell and Greig's own arms. At the bottom are the arms of Brady Brim-DeForest, the Maxwell 'GAM' monogram and the arms of Gordon Casely.

Normally a Festschrift is collated and presented to the recipient in their lifetime, but in producing this lovely book the authors may be forgiven since they have brought him to life again with this collection of his heraldic work. As they are the first to admit, the volume is not exhaustive (I have two examples of his work which are not included) but enough pieces are present to show his broad range of artistic ability, from armigerous families' coats of arms, badges, banners and bookplates, ecclesiastical heraldry, precious metal work and carpentry, to a selection of his published articles.

Essentially in full colour, mainly one coat of arms per page, with added notes (often by the armigers) and asides – some of which made me laugh out loud – there is a foreword by Lord Lyon King of Arms, an appreciation by Gordon Casely, an introduction by the editors, and a comment by the publisher.