

This article was downloaded by: [Northwestern University]
On: 12 February 2015, At: 10:52
Publisher: Routledge
Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered
Number: 1072954 Registered office: Mortimer House, 37-41
Mortimer Street, London W1T 3JH, UK



Archaeological Journal

Publication details, including
instructions for authors and
subscription information:
<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/raij20>

Remarks on Medieval Heraldry, with a View to an Ordinary of Arms; and Siggestions for Copying existing Examples

W. S. W.

Published online: 10 Jul 2014.

To cite this article: W. S. W. (1848) Remarks on Medieval Heraldry, with a View to an Ordinary of Arms; and Siggestions for Copying existing Examples, Archaeological Journal, 5:1, 9-17, DOI: [10.1080/00665983.1848.10850680](https://doi.org/10.1080/00665983.1848.10850680)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00665983.1848.10850680>

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

Taylor & Francis makes every effort to ensure the accuracy of all the information (the "Content") contained in the publications on our platform. However, Taylor & Francis, our agents, and our licensors make no representations or warranties whatsoever as to the accuracy, completeness,

or suitability for any purpose of the Content. Any opinions and views expressed in this publication are the opinions and views of the authors, and are not the views of or endorsed by Taylor & Francis. The accuracy of the Content should not be relied upon and should be independently verified with primary sources of information. Taylor and Francis shall not be liable for any losses, actions, claims, proceedings, demands, costs, expenses, damages, and other liabilities whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with, in relation to or arising out of the use of the Content.

This article may be used for research, teaching, and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproduction, redistribution, reselling, loan, sub-licensing, systematic supply, or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden. Terms & Conditions of access and use can be found at <http://www.tandfonline.com/page/terms-and-conditions>

REMARKS ON MEDIEVAL HERALDRY, WITH A VIEW TO AN ORDINARY OF ARMS;

AND SUGGESTIONS FOR COPYING EXISTING EXAMPLES.

THE great assistance, which those who engage in archæological and genealogical pursuits may derive from heraldry, is well known to such as are at all conversant with the art as formerly practised. By means of it, not only may families be traced, and their alliances ascertained, but the dates of architecture, painted glass, effigies, and other sepulchral monuments, mural paintings, decorative sculpture and carving, seals, and thereby undated charters, may often be determined within a very few years; and the families, or sometimes the individuals, under whose patronage, or to whose memory, or for whom they were erected or executed, may not unfrequently be discovered. Even when the coat armour itself cannot be identified with that of any particular family, the mere form of the shield, or design of some of the charges on it, will generally, to the practised eye, be a pretty certain indication of the period to which it belongs. Those who have made themselves acquainted with heraldry only in its modern use and application, may have expected to find some of the results above mentioned, and been disappointed in consequence of not being aware of the great dissimilarity in many respects between the heraldry of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, and that of more recent times; especially as regards the arrangement or marshalling of arms, the methods of differencing coats borne by members of the same family, and the disregard of minutiae to which great importance has been since attached.

A good History of Heraldry would be a great acquisition, and might be made as interesting as useful. It is curious to observe its rise, progress, and decline, contemporaneously with pointed architecture, though it is difficult to trace any connection between them that should have occasioned or will account for the coincidence. There is not much to be found in any publication on the early usages. Dallaway's Inquiry is far from satisfactory. Some particulars have been recently

brought forward in the Glossary of Heraldry published by Mr. Parker, but however much a future edition of that useful book may be improved, a work of a different kind, and in another form, is required. The writers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, from whom most of the modern notions of heraldry are derived, particularly the earlier of them, were extremely fanciful, and are very little to be relied on as to the past usages even when they profess to state facts. A considerable amount of traditional knowledge might have been expected to have come down to them through the heralds, who, though not incorporated till the first year of Richard III., were acting as a society upwards of sixty years before, and had been in constant intercourse from the first; yet little of such information can be traced in the writings referred to, nor can much be gathered either from the Boke of St. Alban's, or from Upton De Studio Militare, to which the monk of St. Alban's seems to have been largely indebted. Several of the ancient rules are by no means well understood. That they were materially different from the modern is manifest, but the limits of them, and the circumstances in which they were applicable, have not yet been made out. It may nevertheless be hoped, that by the co-operation of some of those who are best acquainted with these matters, and by collecting, arranging, and comparing existing examples, much may be effected towards determining them. Having often wished that in this manner something might be attempted, I was much gratified on learning that the Central Committee of the Archæological Institute had proposed to prepare for publication a Manual of Heraldry; which I presume is intended to supply to some extent the void that has hitherto so long existed, and will treat principally of medieval heraldry, or heraldry in relation to archæology, and be chiefly based on existing examples and other contemporary evidence.

There will, however, still be a work much wanted, to which I beg leave to call the attention of the members of the Institute in general, and that of the Central Committee in particular. I mean an improved Ordinary of arms. Few persons, possessing any acquaintance with heraldry, can have occupied themselves in the study of the remains of medieval art, without having felt the need of a volume convenient in size, that might enable them to ascertain by what families the arms they meet with were borne. Such a work as I suggest would

go far to answer this purpose. As some readers may not know the nature of an Ordinary of arms, I will mention that it is a comprehensive catalogue or collection of arms, arranged by their blazon, (i. e. descriptions, for cuts would be much too costly,) so that any particular coat required can be easily found, and with it the name of the family who bore it. This, it will be seen, differs conversely from those collections by which the name being known, the arms can be found; for here the arms being known, the name could be ascertained. The only Ordinary in print, I believe, is that of Glover, who was Somerset Herald temp. Eliz.; which, with some additions, or, as it is called, augmented and improved, has been given in the first volume of Edmondson's *Complete Body of Heraldry*, (2 vols. folio,) and in the first volume of Berry's *Encyclopædia Heraldica*, (4 vols. 4to.,) but never separately published: in the former it occupies, indexes included, 128 pages; in the latter 224. Both of those are expensive works, and from their size ill adapted for ready reference. Whereas an improved edition of this Ordinary, confined as it is and ought to be to the medieval period, or nearly so, might be comprised in a moderate sized volume, convenient for use, and reasonable in price.

From the materials which have been brought to light within the last few years, and by the extended means of correspondence and collection now in the power of the Archæological Institute, much authentic information for the purpose might be obtained. Seals, sculptured architectural decorations, effigies, brasses, and other sepulchral monuments, rolls of arms, painted glass, mural paintings, carvings, illuminations, and the like, would furnish numerous examples of arms and heraldic usages, of the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth centuries, to verify, correct, and enlarge the Ordinary, as well as to enrich the Manual; indeed all the authorities collected for the latter would be valuable contributions towards the preparation of the former. With the view of increasing yet further the materials for these purposes, I would invoke the assistance of the provincial Societies. Among the best services that they could render to their respective districts, would be the obtaining and preserving authentic copies of all armorial bearings and inscriptions within their localities, which were executed previously, say, to the accession of Queen Elizabeth, or the Revolution of 1688. These it would be a great

matter to have faithfully copied before time, or the hand of the spoiler or restorer shall efface them. Such copies would throw light on each other, and assist essentially in verifying the genealogies and arms of the county families in times past, and become valuable documents in the hands of local historians. Examples of coat armour, badges, crests, &c., that can be referred to the thirteenth, fourteenth, or the early part of the fifteenth century, are especially deserving of notice.

Glover's Ordinary, judging from the printed copies of it, does not refer to any authorities; nor are the additions by Edmondson and Berry in any way distinguished from the original work. But Glover himself may be regarded as an authority to some extent; for he was a learned herald and careful compiler. I would therefore recommend that the text of Glover should be printed from, or collated with, the MS. in the custody, I believe, of the College of Arms, and that all the additions and corrections by Edmondson and Berry should be retained, but marked in some way for distinction, as suppose with an asterisk (*) and dagger (†) respectively; and that all those made under the sanction of the Committee should have the authorities for them subjoined, by which they would be readily known: and in order that such references may be both brief and clear, an explanation of them should be inserted at the beginning. To names which are alike, though borne by different families, it would be advisable to add the distinguishing localities; for Glover was in general content to give the name without more. On no account should any new matter be introduced without the authority for it, or, if merely explanatory, without its being inclosed in brackets or the like.

The book would be made yet more useful if it contained a catalogue of the arms of the kings and queens of England, and of their children, and a list of such royal and other cognizances and badges as are well authenticated. Those arms and the royal cognizances and badges might for the most part be collected from Milles's Catalogue of Honor, Sandford's Genealogical History, Vincent's Errors of Brooke, and Mr. Willement's Regal Heraldry. The author of the last-mentioned work would I hope not only readily give permission to use the information contained in it, but furnish other valuable matter for the publication from the rich store that he is reputed to possess. At all events, I trust Mr. Willement, to

whose early appreciation of the importance of a close attention to heraldic design we are much indebted, will not fail to favour the public at no distant day with an enlarged edition of that very useful and attractive volume, his *Regal Heraldry*, which has already been waiting too long for additions from his hand.

There are several coats, supposed on good grounds to have belonged to families of distinction or influence, that cannot at present be clearly identified. If a selection of these were appended, it might eventually lead to their being rightly appropriated.

Trusting that some endeavours will be made to collect authentic copies of existing remains of medieval heraldry, and such inscriptions as accompany them, either by societies or individuals, I will proceed to offer a few hints and suggestions for the assistance of those who engage in so commendable an undertaking, that the fruits of their labour may be the more satisfactory.

Every copy of arms should be accompanied by the name, not only of the parish and building, but also of the part of the building, where the original is to be seen : and when taken from a sepulchral monument, beside these particulars, the relative place which the arms occupy on the tomb or slab is often important, and should therefore always be mentioned ; and it should be stated also whether there remain any traces of other coats on the same tomb or slab, and if any, how many there were originally, and at what parts of it ; and all which remain should be copied. For, though the order in which different coats were arranged on a medieval monument is not well understood, there is good reason to believe some method was observed, which, if better known, would much assist in identifying the deceased, and in ascertaining the alliances of the family. An examination of a few early altar tombs and slabs enriched with several shields of arms beside that of the deceased, and a comparison of them with the pedigrees of the families, will suggest much on this point. A plan of the arrangement of the shields would often be found the easiest and best mode of conveying such information. In like manner whenever several escutcheons are found together in a window or elsewhere, it is expedient to ascertain the original number and sketch the order of the arrangement, as well as copy all that remain.

When beside the arms the inscription or any part of it remains, both should be copied.

With regard to the mode of copying arms, this will vary with the materials on which they are found. If they are engraved on brass, they may be rubbed off on paper in the usual way, either with heel-ball or black lead. If carved on stone or wood, they may sometimes be copied either by the application of wet unsized paper, or by rubbing as just mentioned; but the heel-ball process is not then so suitable as the tissue paper and black lead. If they are on glass and accessible, they should be traced on paper. Where none of these modes are practicable, a drawing should be made of them, and this should be executed with the most scrupulous fidelity, even to the peculiar forms of the shield and charges. In copying arms or inscriptions by the application of wet unsized paper or by rubbing, it is very important to clear out the lines &c. well first with a *wooden* point and a brush, as the smallest line or dot is often too significant to be omitted, and a date may come off falsely owing to a little indurated dirt or paint. On no account should any use be made of metal points, because of their scratching the original.

If unable to copy the arms in any way, recourse must be had to blazoning (i. e. describing) them, but this, unless done by a well-informed herald, in technical language, is far from satisfactory. Care should then be taken to be quite sure of the charges, and to distinguish them from diapers and other ornaments; for such things have often been confounded with the arms. The material too on which they are executed, and the mode of execution, whether sunk, raised, painted, &c., should always be stated.

Differences will sometimes be found in arms meant for the same, that are not to be attributed to ignorance or inadvertence, but to the nature of the materials on which they are executed rendering the correct representation of certain forms and details difficult. Instances of this are met with sometimes, I believe, in enamel, but more frequently in painted glass and on tiles, though some modern writers have referred to examples on glass as of great authority where doubts have existed as to the exact bearing. The author of a work on painted glass recently reviewed in this Journal, whose practical acquaintance with the art, and extensive knowledge of the subject, make his remarks of peculiar value, says, "misrepre-

sentations of heraldry occur nearly as frequently in late, as in early works; the complexity of the bearings in late shields counterbalancing the facilities of execution afforded by the then recent discoveries^a." I am enabled on the same authority to add, that sometimes the shield or principal charge is left white, giving the arms an unfinished appearance, and at others the smaller and subordinate charges, such as fleurs de lys, roses, crosets, and the like, are left white, or falsely coloured: all of which may be easily accounted for by the peculiarities of glass painting; such as the difficulty of leading one piece of coloured glass into another; the labour of abrading the coloured surface of coated glass; the general facility of applying the yellow stain; and its occasional or partial failure of effect, so that charges intended to be all of one colour are sometimes of different colours. Black, or more correctly speaking an intense brown, is sometimes found substituted for purple; and after the accession of Henry VII. arms frequently occur in white, yellow, and brown, with little or no regard to the proper tinctures. For further information as to the peculiarities of that art with a view of detecting and accounting for such inaccuracies, I must refer to the book itself.

In windows coats are sometimes seen reversed, i. e. the wife's arms on the dexter side, and the husband's on the sinister; or the second and fourth quarters where the first and third should be; or the shield may present a bend sinister instead of a bend dexter. These anomalies are not uncommon, and will often, if not always, be found to be owing to the glass having been taken in pieces and been put together again by an ignorant glazier, who has placed the inner side of it outward^b. With these, however, must not be confounded the comparatively rare instances of the lady's arms appearing in the more honourable place in consequence of her having been a great heiress, or of higher rank than her husband. Repairs of windows have also led to the unintentional falsification of arms. The insertion of later glass can sometimes be detected only by a very experienced eye, or by an examination of the edge, where practicable, for the modern will be found cut with a diamond, and not chipped like the old.

^a An Inquiry into the difference of style observable in ancient Glass Paintings, Oxford, 1847, vol. i. p. 29, where some remarkable examples of misrepresented coats are mentioned.

^b The inside of a glass painting (which should always be next the spectator) is that side on which the *outlines* of the work are painted with brown enamel.

Where arms are carved on stone or wood, and were coloured, the smaller details may be wanting, because they were executed in colour only: and in some cases the work may have been recoloured incorrectly, and borders or other differences omitted. In such as are carved there is often a want of true proportions, forms, or positions of the ordinaries or other charges.

The heraldry on tiles is little to be trusted. It is generally rude and imperfect, and sometimes grotesque, in consequence of the process of the manufacture being ill adapted for correct representation. What are meant for mere outlines often appear like borders or cotices. The forms of the charges too were liable to be distorted by accidental pressure while the clay was soft, and afterwards by the irregular shrinking and warping of it in the kiln.

Next to those on vellum or parchment, probably arms painted on stone or wood, when we can be satisfied that they have never been retouched, are the best authorities, as the artist had fewer difficulties to overcome; but it must be borne in mind that some of the colours were liable to change, particularly the vermillion to become almost black; and where there has been gilding, a brown ground will often be found in its stead.

Some instances of inexplicable heraldry have arisen from the ignorance of those by whom repairs and restorations (as they were supposed to be) have been effected. These probably are not always of modern date; and after the lapse of a century or two are not easily detected. Strange anomalies may thus occur. For example, on a recent occasion, where some repairs of a church were in progress with the best intentions, a man was in imminent danger of being represented as having married his grandmother, in consequence of his broken shield being replaced by a copy of the arms on his grandfather's monument; which was thought a very cautious mode of proceeding, as they were assumed to be unquestionably the family coat; but fortunately the intervention of a herald, who accidentally visited the church, saved the reputation of the deceased.

As often as heraldic remains are unaccompanied by an inscription fixing the date of them, in addition to minute attention to the forms of the shield and charges, nothing should be omitted to be noticed by which the date may be ascer-

tained. This the style and execution of the monument, or the mouldings or ornaments upon it, an effigy, or the case-ment where there has been a brass, may in many cases supply.

To revert in conclusion to the primary object of this paper, I trust I may express a confident hope that the Institute, with its extended means of correspondence and collection, will at least in the first instance render these important facilities available for the purpose of obtaining the further information required for an improved Ordinary of arms; and that eventually we may have such a work of that kind as will be a truly valuable aid to the archæological inquirer.

W. S. W.

NOTICE OF RECENT DISCOVERIES IN CHESTER CATHEDRAL,

ILLUSTRATIVE OF THE ORIGINAL ARRANGEMENT OF THAT
STRUCTURE IN NORMAN AND LATER TIMES.

EXCAVATIONS which have been made within the last few years in the choir of the cathedral at Chester, in effecting certain alterations in the internal arrangements, have brought to light the foundations of some of the pillars of the Norman church, which are exhibited in the accompanying plan. From this discovery it appears that, according to the custom usually followed during the prevalence of the Norman style, the choir was of much shorter proportions than is common in churches of later date, and that its eastern end was semicircular in plan. The round pillars were 6 ft. 9 in. in diameter, including the moulding of the base, which was a plain torus 3 in. in diameter. The large mass of walling at the junction of the curve with the straight part of the choir, on the north side, was 6 ft. broad, and extended over the whole space between the bases of the pillars of the existing church: a corresponding mass of walling was discovered on the south side of the choir before the other remains were laid open, but, as no precise dimensions of it were taken, it is not marked upon the plan; this last-mentioned piece of walling was found to have been partially disturbed by a grave which