

# SOMERSET HERALDRY SOCIETY

Journal No 12 February 2008

## Chairman's Message

Firstly I would like to wish all our members a somewhat belated Happy New Year. The SHS had a successful 2007 and we hope to do as well in 2008.

You will find in this Journal the programme for March to July, which we hope will be both interesting and informative. In this context the Committee have asked me to say that we would be very pleased (indeed delighted) if any of our members would like to give a talk or show a few Heraldic slides.

Ron Gadd

## Editor's Note

Members are asked to forgive temporary staff for this late edition of the SHS newsletter. Normal service will be resumed, with luck, later in the year.

## Merlyn Jordan



All his SHS friends will greatly miss Merlyn, who died at the end of last year, shown here, second from left, at Hartland Abbey. A poor photograph but good enough to indicate that a wry and amusing comment is about to come forth. Our sympathy goes to Joan, his wife, shown on the right hand side of the photo.

### ***The History of Dunster Church and Priory, by Joan Jordan***

Joan's new book, has quietly been launched, and is available from Halsgrove Direct, Wellington. SHS members were unaware so a notice will feature in the next newsletter. We will also have this fortuitous excuse for re-celebrating the launch of this long-awaited work in the meantime.

# ESQUIRES

*by Ron Gadd*

Although a great deal has been written about Knights and even more about Gentlemen, it seems that not so much attention has been given to the position of Esquires. In a recent 'Heraldry Gazette' the question was asked 'does the fact that a recipient of a Grant of arms is addressed as Esquire, make him one, or is it merely a courtesy?'

This article hopes to shed some light on that question. It is of particular interest, because the demise of the title Esquire, presumably on egalitarian grounds, could be said to deprive those entitled to an honoured status. If we still have Lords and Knights why not Esquires (and even Gentlemen - and Ladies!) Today, the title Esquire, like that of 'Hon', is only, used on documents and is never a self-description.

In his Titles on Honor, (1672) John Selden makes a number of references to Esquires and their origin. Firstly, when talking about Knights Bachelor,

*"are such that are raised for their merit, or hope of their merit, unto a degree next beneath that of Baronets and above the rank of Esquire"*

Later he points out that the title of Esquire, has not the same meaning in 1672 as it had in 'ancient times'. He also notes that the division of society was such that after that of the 'gentry' all the other grades were derived from military orders. In particular an Esquire was one who attended (as a servant) a knight until he was qualified to become a knight himself."

This last comment on the origin of the Esquire agrees with other writers. Keen quotes from Lull's Orders of Chivalry where it is pointed out that every knight has a Squire to serve him. A chapter in Lull's book lays down the qualities of a Squire: to become qualified as a Knight he must be able-bodied, he must be of military age, of good lineage, and must have sufficient wealth to support his rank.

It is also said that a knight should ensure that his squires should be properly motivated to want to become a knight.

Keen points out that at some point, it must have become acceptable for squires to avoid taking up knighthood and to continue a way of life as a squire. It is difficult to say when this was but one writer has pointed out that in the late fourteenth century the already considerable cost of becoming a knight vastly increased at the very time when

the economic position of the country gentry, the very people who would be expected to take up knighthood, deteriorated.

Failure to take up knighthood could mean being subject to 'distrain' (fined) by the crown. This practice was first used in 1353, at that time the level of income from land required for taking up knighthood was £15. Distrain was used by the early Tudors as a source of revenue, the usual occasion being a Royal coronation or wedding. The practice was not followed by Elizabeth and may have been thought to be obsolete. However, at the accession of James I, a proclamation was issued and a list of the names of all who were worth £40 in freehold land was compiled, but no fines were levied. Charles I revived the practice, not because he wanted more knights, but because he wanted the revenue from those who were eligible but did not present themselves to be knighted. (Those eligible were given only one day to get to London). The practice was finally abolished by the Long Parliament in 1640.

It is clear that by the late 14th century, the rank of esquire was held for its own sake and not always followed by automatic progression to knighthood. Selden says that it had become the practice

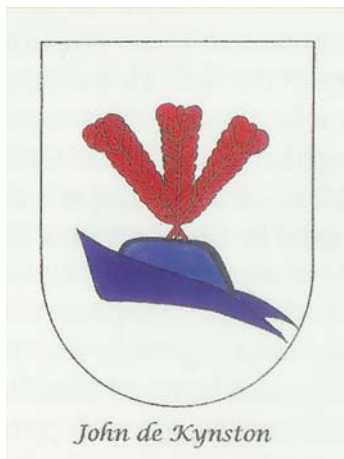
*"That any person of prominence, who because of his eminence, we call him gentleman and knowing that he has no other legal title fixed on him we call him Esquire in such places where his state must be mentioned".*

In part this may have been a response to laws of Henry V and Henry VII, which laid down that knights of the Shires (attending parliament) had to be classed as knights, esquires or gentlemen. Additionally, in 1413 the Statute of Additions laid down that in all rights at common law the 'estate degree or mystery' of the defendant must be stated.

After this Act it became usual to find a description of someone in official documents as esquire, gentleman or yeoman. Sometimes a man was described in one place as an esquire and in another as gentleman.

An illustration of this flexibility, is noted by Sir Thomas Smyth, he said:

*"for amongst the gentlemen, they which claime no higher degree, and yet to be exempted out of the number of the lower sort thereof, be written Esquires: so amongst the husbandmen, labourers, lowest and rascall sort of the people, such as be exempted out of the number of the rascabilitie of the popular, be called and written yeomen as in the degree next unto Gentlemen"*



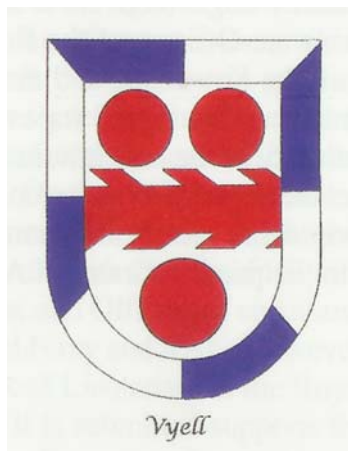
It is worth noting that the specific status of an esquire had been recognized as far back as the reign of Richard II. In 1389 the King granted to John de Kynston the rank of Esquire and a coat of arms (Argent, a chapeau azure, with an ostrich plume gules) so that he would be of suitable rank and status to accept a challenge to a duel by a French knight.



In 1492 Henry VII made Hugh Vaughan, who was a court usher, an esquire and granted arms (probably, Or, a lion reguardant Sable, armed and langued Gules), so that he could take part in a joust.

As Wagner points out in *English Genealogy*, the evolution by which the word esquire came from meaning an apprentice knight, to lord of the manor, and later, to indicate an ever declining social position, is a reflection of the development of the knightly class into the gentry. He points out that from the fifteenth to the nineteenth century, the esquires were the top layer of the gentry, the difficulty was (and is) defining where the layer ended.

This difficulty is highlighted by the fact that John of Gaunt styled his butler, master cook, master carpenter, steward and some of his porters, esquire. It is unlikely that any of these would expect to become knights. This 'inflation' of status may be due to pride but also as a result of an Act of 1392, which provided that no man of lower estate than esquire should wear the livery of his lord away from the lord's house. A number of those employed in the King's household were also classed as esquires. An example was Henry Vyell, who was described as 'kings esquire' in 1392, as was his son William who was one of the marshals of the hall. The Vyells, originally from Bristol held the manor of Claverham in Yatton from the latter part of the 14th century to the early 16th century. The Vyell arms (Argent, a fess raguly between three torteaux, within a bordure gyronny Azure) can be seen in Yatton church. By the late



16th century the proliferation of Esquires caused Robert Glover, Somerset Herald, to note in 1580 that 'at this day that vocation is growen to be the first degree of gentry'.

An example of this is in the list of potential sea Captains drawn up in 1586 when the government of Elizabeth was preparing its 'mobilization' plans. The list of 76 which was drawn up in social ranks, included at its head the Lord Admiral, then four Noblemen, twenty eight Knights, and then eighteen Esquires. This list was followed by 'gentry and others'. The list of knights and esquires included a mix of seamen and non-seamen, but those below this estate were all men with sea experience. Among the knights were Drake, Hawkins and Winter who had all used their advancement at sea to enhance their status.

The Visitations undoubtedly encouraged the use of the title of esquire by those who felt they were so entitled. Sir William Dugdale, Garter King of Arms from 1677 to 1686, issued instructions regarding the conduct of Visitations. A section of these instructions deals specifically with the position of esquires, it reads:

*'There are many assume the Title of Esquire unjustifiably, care is therefore to be taken that they be not registered by that title, unless they be the Heires male or decended from the heires male of a Noblemans Younger son, or from the Heires male of a Knight, or that by Long prescription they can shew that their lineall auncestors were so stiled.*

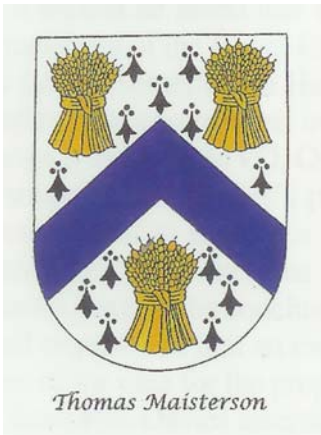
*Otherwise that the person be shreeve of a County or a Justice of Peace, and so stiled in the Kings commission which title if they have noe other pretence to it, to cease when they cease to be in those offices. There are alsoe divers of the Kings Servents which have the Title of Esquire by reason of the Offices which they beare, as the Heraulds, Serjeants at arms etc.'*

As noted above, a list of £40 freeholders was compiled at the accession of James I. This may be the background to the suggestion in 1614 of a way of regulating the title of Esquire. In that year when the King was desperate for revenue and turning to the sale of titles as a source of income, Sir Robert Knollys proposed the setting up of a committee of the Privy Council to sift all claims to the title of Esquire. However, it was thought that there would be so much hostility from the gentry to such a scheme that it was dropped. During the discussion about the scheme it was calculated that possibly 50,000 persons claimed to be esquires. Stone says that in 1641 every Yorkshire gentleman with £250 a year was calling himself esquire. On the other hand the Herald and demographer Gregory King estimated the number of esquires in 1695 to be in the region of 3,000.

One of the reasons for writing this paper was to try to answer the question posed at the start, does being armigerous make someone an esquire? Selden believed that any

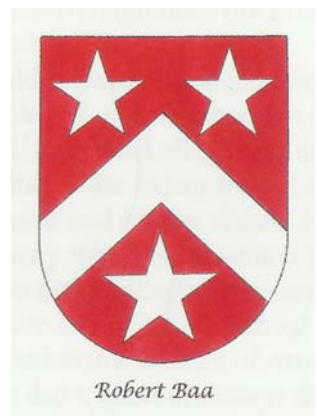
gentleman was likely to be entitled and as an esquire was considered a superior status, it was obvious that all esquires would be armigerous. Perhaps by the time Selden wrote in 1672 this was clear, but in earlier times it was not so straightforward. On the one hand, we see a connection between the status of esquire being recognized by the including in Rolls of Arms of the coats of esquires, as in Sir Robert Lacon's Roll of 1370 which was referred to in the *Scrope v Grosvenor* case. Also, the heralds had accepted that esquires belonged to the armigerous class, taking the view that if the father was entitled to bear arms, then so was a son, even if he was the seventh.

However, whatever the view of the heralds, there are examples of esquires bearing coats of arms even though their fathers were not armigerous. One example was Geoffrey Chaucer (per pale Argent, and Gules, a bend counterchanged) who was a witness in *Scrope v Grosvenor* and said that he had seen the *Scrope* arms at an inn in London!



Others include Thomas Maisterson, (Ermine, a chevron Azure, between three garbs Or) whose father was a townsman and John Edom, who gave evidence in *Grey v Hastings*.

An interesting example of an esquire who was a 'gentleman of ancestry' but with no military background was that of Robert Baa, a witness in *Grey v Hastings*. He describes himself as an apprentice at law, with a coat of arms (Gules, a chevron, between three mullets Argent).



On the other hand evidence adduced in the cases of *Lovel v Morley* and *Grey v Hastings*, shows that some witnesses described themselves as 'gentlemen of ancestry' or 'esquire' but did not bear arms. For example John Lee, Esquire, who said that he lived of his lands. When Selden saw the reference to John Lee, he was surprised, he wrote 'the like whereof or anything of that nature I have not elsewhere observed'.

The late fourteenth century increase in the numbers of those who could properly be styled esquire and who were armigerous made some connection between the rank and a coat of arms. However, the even greater rise in the numbers of lawyers, merchants and administrators and small landowners who obtained coats of arms in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century in the conviction that this would be the mark and proof of gentility shows that there was no necessary connection between the rank of esquire and a coat of arms, even though it was almost certain that at this time an esquire would be armigerous.

There is some authority for the proposition, that whether a person is an esquire or not is a matter of law. In his book 'The High Court of Chivalry' George Squibb quotes a number of cases in which the status of a party was an issue. Most of these cases involve the status of 'gentleman' but some do concern esquires. In *Pincombe v Prust* in 1640 a witness was called to depose that the plaintiff "was and is commonly accounted and reputed to be an utter barrister (a member of the Junior Bar) and therefore an esquire". In *Dixon v Hulker* (1638) Robert Dixon showed a certificate from the clerk of the peace that he was a member of the Commission of the peace for Westminster. As he was Secretary to the Privy Seal, it might be thought that he was important enough to be called esquire under the definition used by Selden (above).

In *Nunne v Chamberlaine* (1638), Nunne claimed the title of esquire by virtue of his post as Serjeant of the Carriage horse to the King. In a case in the Court of Kings Bench in 1741, the Court refused to accept an affidavit in which a Barrister was styled 'gentleman' on the ground that a Barrister is an esquire by his office or profession. An interesting point was raised in the case of *Talbot v Eagle* (1809) where a Captain of Volunteer Infantry was held not to be an esquire, even though in his commission from the Lord Lieutenant he was styled esquire. It was held that the Lord Lieutenant had no power to confer honours. Additionally, as the court ruled specifically that a captain commandant of a corps of volunteer infantry was not an esquire, it is likely that the Lord Lieutenant was addressing him as such out of courtesy. This decision needs to be considered when the position of grants of the College of Arms is addressed.

Other indications of the persons who should be regarded as esquires, include the laying down by Coke that the sons of peers and lords of Parliament are 'in law' esquires. Also, in Sir William Dugdale's instructions to the Heralds, noted above, he laid down that the heirs male of noblemen's younger sons and knights and their descendants and those who could show prescription that their ancestors were so styled, could be included.

By the late nineteenth century a long list of persons came to be accepted as esquires and in 1927 A C Fox-Davies in his *Armorial Families* was able to produce a list of those he thought entitled to the designation Esquire. He said:

*"The right to the affix Esquire is clearly defined. Neither usage and custom, nor use and abuse can now alter the legal right to this description. Anciently, esquires were created by patent but the qualification still exists. Esquires are these:*

*The sons of Peers, Baronets and Knights*

*The eldest son of the younger sons of peers and their eldest sons in perpetuity*

*The eldest sons of a knight and his eldest son in perpetuity*

*The Kings of Arms*

*The Heralds of Arms*

*Officers of the Armed Forces of the rank of Captain (Army) and above*

*JPs of Counties whilst in commission*

*Sergeants-at-arms and Sergeants-at law*

*Queen's Counsel*

*Companions of the Orders of Knighthood*

*Certain officers of the Royal Household*

*Deputy Lieutenants of Counties*

*Commissioners of the Court of Bankruptcy*

*Masters of the Supreme Court*

*Those whom the Queen, in any commission or warrant, styles esquire (including Royal Academicians) and any person who by virtue of his office takes precedence of Esquires."*

It is not clear whether Fox-Davies was relying upon Garter's instruction or some other authority, but his assertion that an Officer of the rank of Captain or above ranks as an esquire, seems to me to be doubtful, in the light of the decision in *Talbot v Eagle*. An interesting point about the signing of commissions, which may bear upon the position of the College of Arms, is the fact that in granting commissions to members of HM Forces, even though signed by the Queen, they do not refer to esquire. The recipient is addressed as 'to our trusty and well beloved X' which is followed by the rank to which appointed. On the other hand, Debrett sets out the requirements for Esquire as used by Fox-Davies, but add further categories viz, persons to whom the Sovereign grants arms with the title of Esquire, Persons styled Esquire by the Sovereign in their patents, and Officers of and above the rank of Army Captain and equivalent ranks in Royal Navy and RAF. However, it should be noted that a commission granting the rank of Lieutenant in the Royal Navy, does not address the recipient as esquire. This it is submitted supports the decision in *Talbot v Eagle*. It should be noted that the Sovereign does not grant Arms (except by warrant to members of the Royal Family).

It was pointed out by Adrian Turner in the *Heraldry Gazette*, that although Fox-Davies ignores grades other than companions in Orders of Knighthood, it is the fact that grants of dignity such as LVO, MVO, OBE and MBE all address the recipient as



Esquire. This supports Fox-Davies's point to the extent that if so addressed in a warrant or commission as esquire is made and his list should be amended to include these categories. The fact that many who are appointed to these Honours are not armigerous leads to the conclusion that there is no necessary link between coat of arms and esquire and that an esquire can be made without a person being armigerous. Part of the case for the proposition that a Grant of Arms makes an Esquire is derived from Fox-Davies assertion that a grant of arms is the only acceptable evidence that somebody is a Gentleman. This is arguable, but in any case as George Squibb pointed out when commenting on the Fox-Davies view, the question is, did a Coat of Arms make a Gentleman or did he get the Grant because he already was one?

The practice today makes it clear that the Crown when granting a dignity, takes no account of the heraldic status of the recipient, and makes a Knight or Esquire as is deemed fit. (Assuming perhaps that anyone proposed for any Honour would be a Lady or Gentleman in any event!).

In Scotland it has been held that the Chiefship of a clan entitled a man to the rank of esquire. This applied only to the Chief of each family, all cadets were merely Gentlemen. Frank Adams in his Clans, Septs and Regiments of the Scottish Highland refers to the Encyclopaedia of the Laws of Scotland, quoting;

*"a man may acquire gentility by office, but this dies with him. Only the chief of each family or branch is an 'Esquire' by descent, ie the cadets are merely 'gentlemen' unless of until received by the King of arms as ecuyer"*

Whether the addressing of a recipient of a Grant from the College of Arms as 'esquire' makes him one depends at least in part, on the status of the College. Although the Kings of Arms make grants with the authority of the Earl Marshall, this 'authority' seems to be similar to the that of the Lord Lieutenant in the case of Talbot v Eagle (above). It may be that Debrett takes the view that as the Kings of Arms are Officers of the Royal household, they grant arms with direct authority from the Sovereign, and thus they include this category in the list. However, as Grants are not signed (or even seen by) the Sovereign, it is submitted that on the authority of the case law, in particular Talbot v Eagle, together with the undoubted fact that in any Commission or Warrant which is intended to create an Esquire, the recipient is specifically named as such, the conclusion must be that the use of the title 'Esquire' in Grants of Arms is merely a courtesy.

**Editor's note:** Not surprisingly practice in Scotland seems to have been the same as that in England. After the war gentlemen with no higher qualification were described as esquires in Lyon Court grants and matriculations. This is no longer the case.

## FINDLATER ARMS: THE WAY FORWARD?

*As Alex isn't editing this Journal, we were able to ask him for a piece on his own arms - and he couldn't refuse. Here it is:*



The Findlater arms were granted in 1863 by Sir John Bernard Burke, Ulster King of Arms, to Alexander Findlater and the descendants of his father John Findlater of County Renfrew. The patent makes no mention that they should be borne according to the laws of arms, so presumably all descendants whether, male or female, Findlater or not, can bear them! The blazon was *Azure, a Chevron between three Estoiles in Chief, Or and an Eagle regardant wings displayed in base, proper.* For Crest, *on a rock an Eagle regardant wings displayed all proper, the breast and each wing charged with an Estoile of the Arms*, and for Motto, *SIT MIHI LIBERTAS*, meaning Liberty be mine. The painting on the Letters Patent is shown to the left.



I was dissatisfied with the composition of these arms, on two counts; first that I dislike estoiles and prefer plain stars; second that the eagle is not a bird shown close or standing by default. The blazon for the shield demands a normal eagle displayed, with the head regardant, or turned to the sinister. I also like the simplicity of mediaeval painting, so did this myself in the style of the Toison d'Or, as left.



For the Congress 2006, we were offered a table banner each for the amazing price of £10, so I asked for this to be painted in this form. The illustration to right shows this.



I have been in discussion with Lord Lyon over matriculating my arms with quarters for Kirkcaldie, Maxwell and Moffat. This is shown to left, but without any differencing. I am particularly attached to the history of Sir William Kirkcaldie of Grange who held Edinburgh Castle for Mary Queen of Scots until capitulating and being promptly hanged by the Regent Morton in 1573. I descend from Jean sister of the

second and last baronet, Sir John Kirkcaldie of Grange.

My Dumfries descent from the Moffats and Maxwells comes from my grandmother as the co-heiress of Dr Thomas Barbour Moffat, MD, LRCS, surgeon at Hawarden, William Ewart Gladstone's home, in the late 19th century. His was a younger branch of the Nithsdale family of Maxwell of Stroquhan, later Maxwell Moffat. They were descended from a brother of the 3rd Lord Maxwell, so leaving the stem line in about 1480. Unfortunately the last Lord Lyon would not accept the proofs of the Maxwell descent and records from the early 15th century are not as plentiful as for later. I intend to ask the new Lord Lyon, when one is appointed – shame on the First Minister.

However, since hearing the bad news and not knowing that Robin Blair was going to resign from the Lyonship early, I had devised a single coat, which I thought might be possible. This incorporates a Maxwell escutcheon over the Findlater eagle. This is against the rules if the eagle is blazoned Or, but as he is proper, it is not a problem. However, I prefer an eagle Or as the arms show better. As can be seen from the painting from the grant, even there it is actually Or. I thought to add a narrow bordure Sable, but it looked heavy and unattractive, so to avoid the metal on metal rule I thought to fimbriate it Sable: that would make it follow the rules. This is shown below.



It is also a conceit, because the arms of the Earl of Nithsdale, chief of the Maxwells, were from 1620 shown as *Argent a double headed eagle Sable charged on the breast with the ancient arms of Maxwell, videlicet Argent a saltire Sable*. A version of this is also illustrated below, but it's actually the arms of Dalbeattie, based on Maxwell of Munches, a cadet of the Earl of Nithsdale. It demonstrates the conceit, but of course seen alone, that would only be apparent to the knowledgeable. No doubt in due course I may be able to tell you how this little tale ends.

Alex Maxwell Findlater



# REVIEW OF EVENTS

## Visit to St. Mary's Church, Yatton and St Lawrence's East Harptree, September 2007

We gathered in the sun to hear from Nicholas Deas about a church exceedingly well



endowed with monuments. Much of the building is 14th century, with a strangely unfinished spire, but it was greatly enriched in the 15th. Sir John Newton and his wife Isobel Chedder (of Cheddar) were responsible with the North chapel containing their memorial tomb-chest, the magnificent clerestory and the South porch, that with its carved foliage, fleurons and crockets and the pierced parapets is said to be the most highly decorated in Somerset.

By the South porch at St Mary's.

The 1829 East window of the Newton

chapel told almost the whole story of the families of Yatton in heraldic shields.

In the top row are:

**De Wyck**, C12-14, argent, a chevron gules between three crosses patonce sable.

**Chedder**, C15, sable, a chevron ermine between three escallops argent.

**Lisle**, nephew of Isobel and son of the Earl of Shrewsbury, or, a fess between two chevronels sable.

**Gournay**, C14, paly of six or and azure.

In the middle row:

**Glastonbury, Wells and Bath.**, Yatton having being a Prebendal manor.

At the bottom:

**Hampton**, C15, azure, a bend or between six fleur-de-lis of the second. These are the arms of the ruling Bosnian Kotromanin family, C14-15, rewarded with Somerset Manors for their support of the English Plantagenets.

**Newton**, C15-16, argent, on a chevron azure three bars or.

**Stalling**, C16-17, gules, three escallops in bend argent, on a chief of the second a martlet sable. Sir Nicholas Stalling purchase the manor of Yatton when many of the episcopal manors were sold by the Crown to pay for war with Spain.



**Kenn**, C16, ermine, three crescents gules.

**Griffin**, C17, vert (sable?), a griffin sergeant argent.

**Poulett**, C17-19, sable, three swords in pile points in base argent, pommels and hilts or.

There was more in the NW window, that in 1928 recreated a lost shield that was recorded by Collinson., showing Newton impaling Hampton quartering Poulett. On again to the handsome Early English South window of the South transept, there were three C15 arms showing the Vyells of the C14 (see page 4) who held Claverham in Yatton , and the related families of Willoughby, Wayte, Popham and Coudray.

A diehard core of the party made it to Blagdon for lunch by the lake, and on to East Harptree, still gloriously in the sun. The monument to Sir John Newton, grandson of Sir John of the Yatton memorial, was seen immediately as we entered the porch. This Sir John had married Margaret, daughter of Sir Anthony Pointz of Iron Acton. The shield over it represents Newton (12 quarterings) impaling Pointz (8 quarterings).



St Lawrence's Church, E Harptree



Sir John Newton, d. 1568, with his 20 children

Another pierced parapet crowns the tower, and the chancel within is C13. The Newton tomb-chest had originally stood inside the church. Sir John's large family nearly all went on to be prominent, many in the church, and the Visitation Pedigrees name 6 of his 8 sons. The eldest son Henry bought The Great House, Clifton from St James's Priory, Bristol as the family's town house, leaving it on his death to his brother John. A monument to Antholin, John's wife and daughter and heir of Henry Clarke of Wells in St Peter's church adjoining the Great House included a shield with 17 Newton quarterings impaling Clarke of Wells. Even more poignantly, both the house and the church were destroyed in the 1940 bombing raid.



# The Somerset Heraldry Society Annual Dinner

The Bishop's Palace, Wells, October 2007

As in all previous years of the Society's existence the greater part of the membership (numerically that is) gathered for its annual feast in a mood to enjoy itself. As in previous years it was notably successful in doing so. Friendships were renewed in the grand surroundings of the Palace reception rooms before Anthony Wood talked to us about his long career as a heraldic artist.

Undoubtedly one of the most respected leaders in the field, he showed us slides of many of his pieces, accompanied by many entertaining tales of some of the arcane practices and individuals that he had come across.

Anthony is noted beyond his meticulous and imaginative work for setting up the thriving department of Heraldic Art at Reigate School of Art and Design. There he met Margaret his wife who proved to be a soul mate also in the perfectionism of their work together.



Our Chairman, saying all the right things (in the main)



Hattie Findlater, Anthony Wood and Hermione Hobhouse reluctant to leave after a fine evening

A splendid dinner followed with excellent wine, speeches and good humour flowing, and as in all previous years the only off note of the evening was in the worried looks from the Palace staff that we might be staying there until breakfast.

And as usual credit was due to Ron, Alex and Hattie for thought and preparation for the evening.

# **The Hawkings Arms and Descent**

A Talk by David Hawkings, February 2008

The Hawkins name is found across the whole country, with derivation from the village of Hawking in Kent, or the enthusiastic loins of Henry VIII (Hal kin). The spelling was extended from Hawkins in the C18 by one who signed X on his wedding document that was completed as Hawkings by the clergyman. This poignant document was one of so many looked out by David, that it could be said there can be few people with as much knowledge of the places to find them.

He suspects a link between his own line and the Hawkins of Stogursey whose arms connect with Sir John Hawkins d.1595. In essence these are, argent, a saltire sable five fleurs-de-lis of the first, a lion passant or, standing on a base Barry wavy of four argent, in chief four bezants or. (There is much symbolic reference to the early naval action against the French here.)

After a short description of lively details of ancestors from all walks of life, including one that found himself involuntarily in Australia, David talked about the historical events such as drafting of armed forces, taxation, censuses and registrations such as marriage and baptism that have led to the recording of information that has become so useful to the genealogist. This was a big subject in itself but he then detailed the widespread sources of the research material, how they had been moved about, damaged and eroded by historical changes to power bases and land holdings, fire, war and the continuing ignorance of their value.

Finally he talked about the specialist interests that he had developed from his eclectic researches, going beyond the Hawkings line, from the story of prison ships to the world of insurance company marks to be seen still fixed to the facades of buildings as early certificates. His exhibits included an impressive range of books by himself on these subjects.

## **SOMERSET HERALDRY SOCIETY**

### **Officers**

Chairman	Ronald Gadd, MBE, RD
Hon Secy	Alex Maxwell Findlater
Hon Treasurer	Anthony Bruce
Committee Member	David Hawkings
Co-opted Member	Peter Giles

### **Annual Subscription**

for ordinary members £10 pa  
for family members £15 pa

### **Objects**

The aims shall be to promote and encourage the study of heraldry especially in the historic county of Somerset.

### **Address for correspondence**

The Grammar House, The Hill, Langport,  
Somerset, TA10 9PU  
Telephone & facsimile 01458 250868  
email alex@findlater.org.uk

# PROGRAMME OF EVENTS    Spring and Summer 2008

- Wednesday 12th March**    7.30 pm    **AGM**, followed by **Scottish Heraldry, Work in Progress** -  
A talk by Alex Findlater.  
at The Grammar House, Langport
- Wednesday 16th April**    7.30 pm    **A Death at the College.**  
A talk by Michael Messer  
at The Grammar House, Langport
- Wednesday 21st May**    7.30 pm    **Arms of the Royal Consorts.**  
A talk by Anthony Ryan  
at The Grammar House, Langport
- Saturday 21st June**    11.00 am    **Visit to Exeter Cathedral**  
A specially organised guided tour, with  
commentary on the heraldry by David Snell.  
**Lunch** at the historic Ship Inn, St Martins  
Lane nearby.
- 2.15 pm    A guided tour of the Cathedral's roof  
**Please book** in advance and also note that there  
will be a charge for the tours
- Thursday 17th July**    2.30 pm    **Visit to Knightshayes Court,**  
Bolham near Tiverton (National Trust)  
Meet at the house or  
for lunch 12.30 at the Hartnoll Hotel, Bolham  
**Please book** in advance for lunch.

Bookings for Exeter and Knightshayes to Anthony Bruce,  
01823 672892, [anthony.bruce@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:anthony.bruce@tiscali.co.uk)

## DIRECTIONS: THE GRAMMAR HOUSE, THE HILL, LANGPORT

Coming from Taunton: after the town square, when the road does a sharp left turn, go straight ahead up the Hill.

Coming from the East or the North: come into Langport and after Tesco, LOOK OUT. At a sharp right-hand corner, turn left round the Post Office, up the Hill;

Both: Park; walk back down until you come to the first house on the left (coming down) on the incline of the hill. Go down the alley next to the house and knock!