

HERALDRY IN DORFOLD HALL



Dorfold Hall is situated in Acton, near Nantwich. It has been described as one of the two finest Jacobean houses in Cheshire (the other being Crewe Hall).¹ In his great work on the history of Cheshire, George Ormerod describes the house as ‘a lofty pile of dark brick, finished with large bay windows and groupes of massy chimneys’.²

The present house was built by a member of the Wilbraham family though the manor was in the hands of other families previously. The Wetenhalls held it in the late medieval period and then the Bromleys. For a time, the earls of Derby held the manor from the Davenports of Bramhall and then again by the Bromleys who, in 1602, sold the manor to Sir Roger Wilbraham of Nantwich (1553-1616), a prominent lawyer, Solicitor General of Ireland and Master of Requests to King James I. He immediately passed it, along with the manors of Acton and Hurlleston, to his brother Ralph (1558-1628), another lawyer and Feodary of Cheshire and Flint. It was this Ralph Wilbraham who built the present house in 1616 (taking about four years to complete the project) and eventually settled here, moving from the family’s Townsend House in Nantwich, where Ralph entertained King James I in 1617. Some say that he hoped to entertain the king again at some time in his new home but never did.

The Wilbrahams continued in possession for five generations until 1754 when the estates were sold to James Tomkinson of Bostock Hall, a wealthy Nantwich lawyer, whose son Henry died in 1822. The Tomkinson heiress then married Wilbraham Spenser Tollemache, a direct descendant of the original Wilbraham’s of Woodhey. Tollemache’s daughter married Charles Savile Roundell, ancestor of the present owners.

Ormerod’s editor, Thomas Helsby, in adding to the description of the house states that ‘over several fire-places in the house are carved and emblazoned arms with many quarterings of the Wilbrahams, and of Sir Christopher Hatton’. Despite this apparent profusion of heraldry there is in fact little evidence of it today and what there is, is not connected to the Wilbrahams, the Tollemaches or the Roundells as one might expect. But, what little there is, is of significance to the student of armory and raise a number of questions.

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At the head of the Jacobean staircase is a bedroom in which the chimneypiece and the backing to the iron grate have the arms of King James I with the date 1621. There is also a stained glass panel with the same arms.

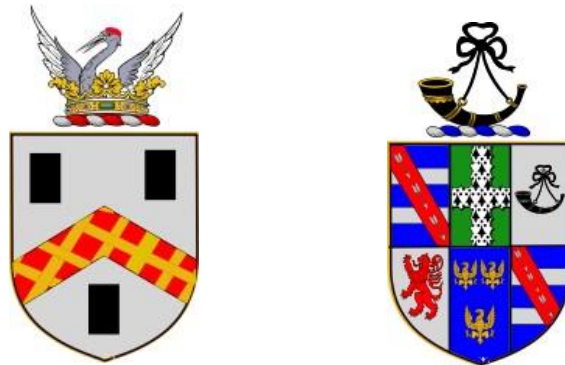
When King James I inherited the English throne in 1603, he established a union with Scotland, and quartered the Royal Arms of England with those of Scotland. The arms of the Kingdom of Ireland were also added for the first time. This style of Royal Arms were last used by Queen Anne. The arms used by James in England quartered France and England with Scotland and Ireland. The supporters became: dexter *a lion rampant guardant Or imperially crowned*, for England, and sinister, *a unicorn rampant Argent*, for Scotland. The English crest of a crowned lion statant reguardant and motto *Dieu et mon Droit* ('God is my Right') were retained and may be seen on the fire-grate. However, King James's also used his personal motto *Beati pacifici* ('Blessed are peacemakers') as on the chimneypiece in the bedroom here at Dorfold. James considered himself to be *Rex Pacificus* ('King of Peace') and lived for peace and harmony keeping England out of war for twenty years and managed the unification of the Catholic and Protestant churches. So far as I am aware this is the only contemporary example of King James' arms in the county and is also a rare example of the use of his motto. It is believed that Ralph Wilbraham decorated this room with a visit from the King specifically in mind.



*Depictions of the Royal Arms of James I
(Courtesy of Candice Roundell, Dorfold Hall)*

The bedroom on the opposite side of the stair-head is panelled in oak throughout. It has a wooden chimneypiece with coupled columns set into which are two escutcheons. The first of these represents the families of Delves, of nearby Doddington, with the motto *En Deu Ma Foy* ('In God My Faith'). The other is Done of Utkinton, near Tarpoley and bears the date 1610.

Unusually, and the only time I have seen it, the crest shown is a hunting horn whereas the usual crest for the Done family is a sheaf of arrows.



Sir Thomas Delves of Doddington (1574-1648) was knighted in 1609, became a baronet in 1621 and appointed sheriff of Cheshire in 1638. About 1590, he married Mary, daughter of Thomas Wilbraham of Woodhey, a distant cousin of the Dorfold branch: she died in 1603.

Sir John Done (1577-1629) was knighted in 1617 by King James at Utkinton Hall. He married Dorothy, Thomas Wilbraham's second daughter, possibly about the year 1610. A third daughter, Mary, married Sir Richard Grosvenor of Eaton, baronet. These three ladies were sisters to Sir Richard Wilbraham of Woodhey, the first baronet. The question here is that as the ladies were members of the Woodhey branch, why are their marriages represented here in this room at Dorfold?

The Great Chamber on the first floor is a magnificent room which has a tunnel-vaulted plaster ceiling with broad, moulded and studded bands in interlocking geometric patterns and pendants. The tympana at each end of the room are stuccoed. The big chimneypiece has Roman Doric columns at each side. The room has a large bay window overlooking the garden in which is stained glass representation of the Royal Arms of King James I.



On the mantle over the fireplace are three escutcheons set into the badge of the Order of the Garter. The first of these (from the left) are the arms of the Cecil family and represent either William Cecil, 1st Lord Burghley (1520-1598), or his son Thomas, 2nd Lord Burghley (1542-

1623). William Cecil an English statesman, the chief advisor of Queen Elizabeth I for most of her reign, twice Secretary of State (1550–53 and 1558–72) and Lord High Treasurer from 1572. He represented Lincolnshire in the Parliament of 1555 and 1559, and Northamptonshire in that of 1563, and he took an active part in the proceedings of the House of Commons until Queen Elizabeth elevated him as Baron Burghley on 25 February 1571. He was made a Knight of the Garter in 1572. His son, Thomas Cecil, took his seat in the House of Lords in 1598, was made a Knight of the Garter by King James in 1601, and subsequently, in 1605 was elevated to become the 1st earl of Essex. During his career as an English politician and soldier during the reign of Queen Elizabeth, he was an MP for Northamptonshire and Lincolnshire at various times, High Sheriff of Northamptonshire, served with distinction in the Dutch Republic, Lord Lieutenant of Yorkshire and Lord President of the Council of the North. He held no office of note under James I. The coronet displayed is that of a baron which therefore dates the creation of this emblem to between 1601 and 1605. He died in 1623.

Next are the arms of a member of the Stanley family. The number of quarterings suggest that it is William Stanley (1561-1642), 6th earl of Derby, who is celebrated here; his arms are encircled by the Order of the Garter and surmounted by an earl's coronet. Like Thomas Cecil, he became a Knight of the Garter in 1601. He was very much a soldier and served in Italy and the Middle East. For religious reasons and to avoid suspicion Stanley limited his involvement with national politics during Elizabeth's reign, and devoted himself primarily to the management of his estates and his dominant position in local administration in Lancashire and Cheshire. He was made a Privy Councillor in 1603 and became Lord Chamberlain of Chester. He died in 1642.

The last coat of arms refers to Sir Christopher Hatton (1540-1591). Although made a Knight of the Garter in 1588 he was not a member of the House of Lords hence his device is not surmounted by a coronet. Hatton was descended of a Cheshire family, became a politician as MP for Northamptonshire from 1571, Lord Chancellor of England from 1587, and a favourite of Queen Elizabeth. He died in 1591. It is though not improbable that Hatton acquired some temporary interest in the manor as he certainly held much property in the general area.

The presence of these escutcheons pose questions. Why are these three gentlemen represented here? What is the connection between these three men and Dorfold? Do the presentation of these coats of arms pre-date the house? Where they in the original Dorfold Hall and then reused in the new building? The answers have so far eluded me. The Roundell family, present owners of Dorfold, suggest that these gentlemen were influential friends or acquaintances of Ralph Wilbraham and that perhaps with a visit of the King in mind, he wished to impress him and his entourage with his such famous connections.³

Within the tympana are the arms of Egerton impaling Stanley and that of Crewe impaling Clippesby. The eastern end of the room has the impaled arms of Sir John Egerton of Egerton and Oulton (1551-1614) who was knighted by Queen Elizabeth in 1599 and was MP for Staffordshire in 1601 and 1604. He married Margaret, daughter of Sir Rowland Stanley of Hooton, who died in 1598. The coat of arms



therefore relates to a marriage which was in existence between c.1570 and 1598. Their presence poses another so far unanswered question. Why are these arms here? So far as I know there is no relationship between the Egertons and the Wilbrahams at this time.

Beneath the arms is a portrait of a Tudor gentleman – Sir John? Perhaps, but it seems similar to known portraits of Sir William Stanley and, if so, the portrait is not associated with the arms above it and likely to be linked to one of the Garter Knights on the fireplace.

At the other end is an impaled coat of arms, the male side of which is incorrectly painted and ought to have a blue background to the silver lion – the arms of the Crewe family.⁴ The eminent lawyer, Sir Randolph Crewe (1559-1646), who became Lord Chief Justice in 1625 and built the original Crewe Hall, married Juliana, second daughter and co-heiress of William Clippesby of Clippesby, Norfolk – a family which had Cheshire connections.⁵ She, his first wife, was born in 1574, married in 1598 and died in 1603. The Clippesby arms were as shown on the female side. This coat of arms represents the marriage of Sir Randolph Crewe, the Lord Chief Justice, and Juliana, daughter of John Clippesby of Clippesby, Norfolk, in 1598. Sir Randolph's mother was Joan, daughter of Ralph Wilbraham of Nantwich. This impaled coat may be seen repeated a number of times in Crewe Hall, Crewe.



Beneath the unknown impaled coat is portrait of an elderly and dignified gentleman. He wears a black flat hat and appears similar to portraits of Sir Randolph Crewe who is shown wearing such a hat. The similarity with pictures of William Cecil cannot be ruled out and if so it is not associated with the arms above it and, as with the arms at the other end of the Great Chamber, likely to be linked to one of those on the fireplace.

The present owners of the hall have suggested that the two portraits are Victorian copies done probably at the time of the changes made to the Drawing Room by the architect Edward Blore in circa 1837. They are said to represent two eminently recognisable Elizabethans - Cecil Lord Burghley and Sir Francis Bacon.

Some initial conclusions are that apart from the Royal Arms, the heraldry to be seen in Dorfold Hall today were commissioned prior to its being built in the second decade of the 17th century. The arms of Done in one of the bedrooms clearly bears the date 1610. The Egerton/Stanley arms in the Great Chamber are from the last decades of the 16th century and the Crewe arms are from c.1600. Two of the Garter Knights represented in that same room are of c.1601-5 and that of the third to the last decade of the previous century.

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BLAZONS

Royal Arms of James I

Arms:

Quarterly –

- 1 & 4. Quarterly 1st and 4th *Azure three fleurs de lys Or* (for France), 2nd and 3rd *Gules, three lions passant guardant in pale Or* (for England);
2. *Or, a lion rampant within a tressure flory-counter-flory Gules* (Scotland);
3. *Azure, a harp Or stringed Argent* (Ireland).

Crest: *A crowned lion statant reguardant*

Supporters:

Dexter: *A lion rampant Or.*

Sinister: *A unicorn rampant Argent.*

Motto:

Beati pacifici

Delves of Doddington

Arms:

Argent, a chevron Gules fretty Or, between three delves Sable.

Crest: *Out of a ducal coronet Or, a demi heron, wings displayed proper crested Gules.*

Done of Utkinton

Arms:

Quarterly of six –

- 1 & 6. *Azure, two bars Argent, over all on a bend Gules three arrows of the second.*

[for Done]

2. *Vert, a cross engrailed Ermine.* [Kingsley alias Wettenhall]

3. *Argent, a hunting horn stringed Sable, within the knot of the string a cinquefoil of the second.* [The arms of the Forestership]

4. *Gules, a lion rampant Argent.* [Leigh]

5. *Azure, crusilly, and three eagles displayed Or.* [Alphram alias Somerville]

Crest: *A hunting horn stringed Sable.*

Cecil, Lord Burghley

Arms:

Quarterly of six -

- 1 & 6. *Barry of ten Argent and Azure, six escutcheons Sable, three, two, one, each charged with a lion rampant of the first.*

2. *Per pale Gules and Azure, a lion rampant Argent holding a tree eradicated proper.* [Winstone]

3. *Sable, a plate between three towers Argent.* [Etchington?]

4. *Argent, on a bend cotised Gules, three cinquefoils Or.* [?]

5. *Argent, a chevron between three chess rooks Ermines.* [Wallcott]

Earl of Derby

Arms:

Quarterly of twelve -

1. *Argent, on a bend Azure three bucks' heads cabossed Or.*
2. *Or, on a chief indented Azure three bezants* [Lathom]
3. *Gules, three mailed legs embowed, and conjoined at the thighs Argent.* [Lordship of Man]
4. *Checky Or and Azure.* [Warren]
5. *Gules, two lions passant in pale Argent* [Strange?]
6. *Argent, a fess Gules, a canton of the second.* [Woodville]
7. *Or, a cross engrailed Sable.* [Mohun?]
8. *Azure, a lion rampant Argent.* [Crewe?]
9. *Checky Or and Azure.* [Warren]
10. *Barry of eight, Argent and Gules, a lion rampant Or.* [?]⁶
11. *Azure, a cross moline Or.* [Molineux?]
12. *Lozengy Ermine and Gules.* [?]

Hatton of Holdenby in Northamptonshire

Arms:

Quarterly of twelve –

1. *Azure, a chevron between three garbs Or.*
2. *Vairy, Argent and Gules.* [?]
3. *Argent, a cross patonce between four martlets Gules.* [Golbourne]
4. *Argent, an eagle displayed Sable.* [Brynne]
5. *Argent, on a bend Sable three covered cups of the field.* [Rixton]
6. *Vert, a cross engrailed Ermine* [Kingsley alias Wettenhall]
7. *Or, a saltire Sable* [Helsby]
8. *Sable, a fess humetty Argent, a crescent Or for difference.* [Bostock]
9. *Azure, five cinquefoils in cross Argent* [Holdenby]
10. *Argent, three bendlets Sable, on a canton of the second, a tower triple towered of the first* [Carvell]
11. *Argent, on a chief Gules three fleur-de-lis Or.* [Uffleet]
12. *Ermine, on a fess Azure three cross-crosslets Or.* [Mortimer]

Crest: *A hind statant Or.*

Egerton

Arms:

Quarterly –

- 1 & 4. *Argent, a lion rampant Gules between three pheons Sable.*

2 & 3. *Or, three piles in point Gules, on a canton Argent a griffin segreant Sable.*

[Bassett]

Impaling:

Argent, on a bend Azure, three bucks' heads cabossed Or. [Stanley]

Crewe

Arms:

Sable (Azure), a lion rampant Argent.

Impaling

Quarterly Argent and Sable, on a bend Gules three mullets of the second, voided of the first. [Clippesby]

¹ Nikolaus Pevsner, *The Building of England: Cheshire* (1971), pp. 201/2. It should be noted that a great deal of Crewe Hall was severely damaged by fire in 1866 and what is seen today is a Victorian rebuild.

² G. Ormerod, *History of the County Palatine of Chester*, vol III, p.345.

³ I am grateful to Mr. Richard Roundell of Dorfold for reading this article and making comments.

⁴ A portrait of Sir Randolph Crewe, by the 17th century painter Peter Lely, shows a black background to the arms, but the normal representation is a blue field.

⁵ W. Rye (ed.), *The Visitations of Norfolk 1563 and 1613*, Harleian Society, vol 32 (1891), p. 77; G.J.Armytage & J.P.Rylands (eds.), *The Visitation of Cheshire 1613*, Record Society, vol (1909), p.69; Ormerod, p. 314.

⁶ Note: In the arms of the Earl of Derby, quarter 10 ought perhaps to be *Barry of eight, Argent and Gules, a lion rampant Sable, crowned Or* for Egmonton of Lancashire.