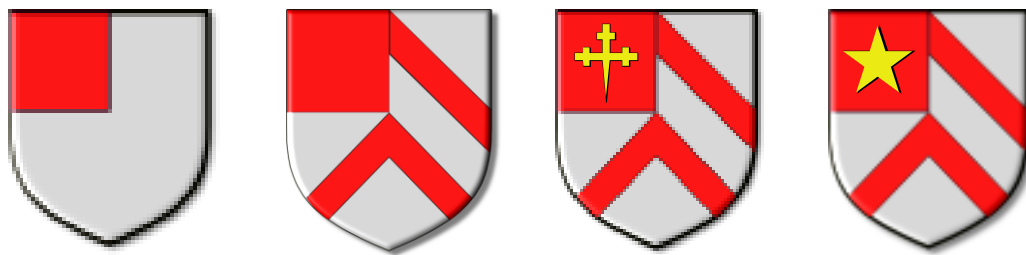


‘A QUARTER GULES’



Among the archives housed at the County Record Office in Chester are several 16th and 17th century documentary sources for the study of Cheshire heraldry. These sources are collections of pedigrees, copies of the visitation of 1580 with additional information, ‘books of arms’, copies of medieval rolls, notes on arms found in Cheshire churches, and so on. In all probability, the majority of the documents were written by, or collected together by, members of the Holmes family, who for four generations were herald painters and deputy heralds in Cheshire; some perhaps by their predecessor Thomas Chaloner, or even by William Smith, Rouge Dragon Pursuivant, a Cheshire man, whose book ‘Galtier’ is among the collection.

This article concerns the ordinary known as a ‘quarter’ which generally occupies, as its name implies, about a fourth of the field, and situated in the dexter chief. This item is often confused in illustrations of old coats of arms with a ‘canton’ and often in blazons the two terms seem interchangeable, despite it being about half the size of the quarter. Both the quarter and the canton can sometimes be the only charge in a coat, but where it is combined with other ordinaries or charges, it is usual for the quarter or canton to overlie the other items. The canton sometimes appears as an augmentation to the original arms, or a difference.

THE BADGE OF CHESTER

Among the several records of medieval armorial bearings are a number which are based on *Argent a quarter Gules*, said to be ‘Le Bage Comitis Cestriæ’.¹ These arms, in addition to the quarter, bear two red chevrons, the upper most being concealed on the dexter side by the quarter, giving the appearance of a bend. Some record the blazon: *Argent, a \wedge a \ and a quarter Gules*, using symbols as a shorthand. The similarity of these coats perhaps indicates some form of association between the families who bore them.

So far as I am aware the documents at Chester are the only source for the badge, and each of the ‘rolls’ or ‘books of arms’ mention this particular coat. I am indebted to Martin Goldstraw who commented that the authoritative J.R. Planché writing in his *The Pursuivant of Arms* records this coat as having been borne by the Clare family.² According to Papworth the arms are those of Clare, though elsewhere he gives the alternative *Argent, a canton Gules* as being ascribed to Clare, along with Moyre of Shropshire and Poincy of Chester.³ The Clares, earls of Hereford, used this coat during the first two decades of the 13th century and then adopted the arms of FitzRobert, earl of Gloucester, *Or two chevrons*

¹ CRO: DAR J/5, p. 4.

² J.R. Planché, *The Pursuivant of Arms or Heraldry Founded Upon Facts* (1852), p.51

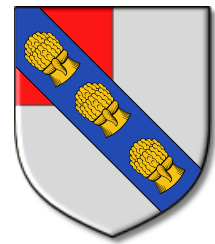
³ J.W. Papworth and A.W. Morant, *An Ordinary of British Armorial* (1874), p. 352, citing *Harl. MS 1078*, f.24, and p. 1033.

Gules, on succeeding to the earldom. In the *Founders Book of Tewksbury Abbey*, Richard Clare I's arms are shown as being *Argent, a canton Gules* quartering *Or two chevrons Gules*, whilst in the same volume the arms of his son and grandson the quarter is reduced to a canton. But how these arms became associated with the earldom of Chester is unknown.

ORREBY AND FITTON

Of the families that used the Chester badge as a base the first is Sir Fulk d'Orreby of Stapleford, who served as both escheator and justiciar of Chester in the mid-13th century, and is shown in the various Cheshire rolls of arms as bearing *Argent, a chevron a bend and a quarter Gules*: his father, Sir Philip, who had been the previous justiciar in the time of King John may have borne the same.⁴ Fulk's uncle, Herbert, had a grant of the manor of Gawsworth and his descendants lived there for four generations terminating with an heiress who married a younger son of the Fittons of Bollin, about 1317.

Sir Richard Fitton, of Bollin, had been justiciar of Chester, 1233-37, also seneschal of the earl of Richmond, in the time of Randle, earl of Chester.⁵ It was his great-grandson, Thomas, who married the Orreby heiress and from that time the family continued to use the Orreby coat for some time until, in the early 14th century, they dispensed with the chevrons and replaced them with 'a bend of Chester' i.e. *a bend Azure charged with three garbs Or*. The parent house of Bolin did likewise but retained the quarter with the bend overlaying it.⁶ The more senior line of Fitton of Pownall seems also to have adopted this new coat differenced by 'three pygeon heads Sable'.⁷



Sir Laurence Fitton of Gawsworth whose arms, *Argent, a bend and a quarter Gules*, are recorded in the Chester rolls of arms was born about 1375 and served Richard II in Ireland, was pardoned by Henry IV in 1404 and continued to serve the Lancastrian kings until he died in March 1456/7.⁸ The same arms are ascribed to his grandson Sir Thomas Fitton, who was born in 1432, fought at Bloreheath on the Lancastrian side, and died in May 1494.⁹ The arms of a Sir Richard Fitton also occur and may refer back to the Richard of Bollin who was justiciar of Chester in 1233 and died twelve years later, or even his father.¹⁰ An early member of the Fittons bore *a label of five points Argent* on the canton or quarter.¹¹ A Sir William Felton is named in one roll with the same arms but this seems to be a miscopying of the surname, and also a clerical error as regards the first name for no man of that name is known in Fitton genealogy.¹²

The early arms of Orreby and Fitton were also borne by the Crioll family of Kent.¹³ The way in which this was drawn in an early roll of arms is, as mentioned before, in such a way as to obscure the dexter half of the upper chevron.¹⁴ Interestingly their namesakes in Hertfordshire bore *Or, two chevrons and a canton Gules*, which has the basis of the alternative arms of the Clare family which they assumed on

⁴ CRO: DAR 17/1, p.95; DDX 364, pp. 20,28. For the Orreby family see G. Ormerod, *A History of the County Palatine of Chester*, 2nd edn. rev. and edited by T. Helsby (1882), ii, pp. 802,803

⁵ J.P. Earwaker, *East Cheshire, Past and Present* (1880), i. p. 50.

⁶ Ormerod, iii, p.347. CRO: DAR J/5, p.27.

⁷ CRO: DAR J/5, P.

⁸ CRO: DAR 17/1, p93; DDX 364, p.18r.

⁹ CRO: 17/1, p. 31r.

¹⁰ CRO: DDX 364, p. 20.

¹¹ J.P. Rylands (ed.), *The Visitation of Cheshire 1580*, Harleian Society, vol. xviii (1882), p. 99; CRO: DAR 17/1, p. 29r.

¹² CRO: DAR J/5, p. 6; DDX 364, p. 29.

¹³ J. Burke, *Encyclopedia of Heraldry or General Armory of England Scotland and Ireland* (1847)

¹⁴ Planché, p.49.

becoming earls of Gloucester. This raises an interesting question as to whether there is a familial link between the Orrebys, Clares and Criolls dating back to the early 13th century.



The Orreby family had links with Lincolnshire and a place called Dalby and interestingly a John, Mathew and a Walter Dalby occur in a number of the Cheshire rolls with arms that are again based on Orreby – *Argent, a chevron and a bend engrailed and a quarter Sable, or Argent, two chevrons and a canton Sable.*

WARBURTON

The Warburtons claim descent from the Duttons of Dutton, making the change of name in the late 13th century, and quartering that family's arms in recognition of the fact. Sir Geoffrey Warburton used a seal with the canton charged with a mullet in 1370 and had probably done so for some time before: these arms are recognised as 'Warburton ancient'. In one source a Sir Gilbert Warburton's arms are drawn and tricked without any difference in the quarter – perhaps an error.¹⁵ Geoffrey also used a seal showing a cormorant, and subsequently the arms bearing three black cormorants about a chevron came to be used, quartered with the 'ancient' coat along with Dutton.¹⁶ Marriages of three generations during the early 14th century are unknown - had they been known they might have afforded a clue as to the use of these ancient arms with perhaps an Orreby or Fitton marriage.



The 'cormorant coat' does not appear in any of the tricked illustrations but does occur in the blazons under the heading 'Cestrie Comitatus' ascribed to both Thomas, Geoffrey and Sir Piers Warburton: the latter was knighted in March 1550, unless, as seems likely, it refers to Sir Peter who lived around 1300, though one of the other Peters who are not known to have received the accolade are possible.¹⁷ Sir Geoffrey Warburton (d. 1383) who was the last of three generations so named, is only ever mentioned in relation to the ancient coat and seems to have been the last to have used it.



¹⁵ CRO: DDX 364, p. 16r.

¹⁶ Ormerod, i, p. 570.

¹⁷ Ormerod, i, p.574; CRO: DAR J/5, pp. 12, 36.

A brass plaque to the memory of Edward Fitton and his wife Anne, daughter of Sir Peter Warburton of Arley, which is in Dublin Cathedral, displays the quarter or canton gules in their respective quartered coats.

MOBBERLEY

William Mobberley who was sheriff of Cheshire in 1319, during the first decades of the 14th century sealed documents with arms bearing the red quarter charged with a cross-crosslet fitché. He married Maud, the daughter and heir of Robert Downes of Chorley who had, on marriage to Margaret Fitton (Maud's mother), received from his brother-in-law, Edmund Fitton, lands in Chorley.¹⁸ Mobberley's use of similar arms may relate to this marriage. Sir John Mobberley, whose arms, *Argent, a \wedge a \ and on a quarter Gules a † Or*, occurs in several documents, is the only named member of this family in the various sources.¹⁹ Curiously I have found no other reference to this knight other than a brief mention in the Booth pedigree which records a marriage with his heiress to a John Fitton.²⁰

CONCLUSION

Prima facie there seems to be no connection between these families, save for the Orreby/Fitton marriage. The families of Orreby, Fitton and Mobberley had members who served the earl of Chester in the office of justiciar which might account for the similarity with 'the badge', but that does not explain the Warburton connection. It seems we shall now never know of the significance of the Earl of Chester's badge or of the links with the four Cheshire families.

¹⁸ Ormerod, iii, p. 416.

¹⁹ CRO: DAR 17/1, p.93; 17/2, p.6; DDX 364, pp. 18r, p. 30.

²⁰ *Visitation of Cheshire 1580*, p.36