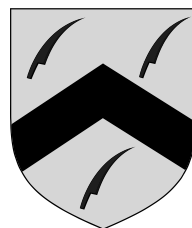


## HERALDIC HARDWARE IN CHESHIRE

Heraldic charges and crests are many and varied with geometric patterns, various objects, human images, animals and birds, mythical monsters and flora. In Cheshire there are a number of ancient families whose coats of arms bear inanimate objects that can be termed tools or ironmongery or hardware. Often the reason these symbols were chosen is not known, nor can the reason be even guessed at. In a few cases, however, the choice of item alludes in some way to the bearer's name – it is a pun and the arms are known as 'canting'.<sup>1</sup> This article will examine Cheshire instances of 'heraldic hardware'. Unless otherwise stated the heraldic descriptions are from the *Visitation of Cheshire, 1580*, as published by the Harleian Society.<sup>2</sup>

Perhaps the most well-known is the arms of the Leverage family who displayed *Argent, a chevron between three ploughshares Sable*. The clue to the use of the plough share in the coat of arms is perhaps in the way the blade levered up the soil, but then sedge is a form of grass and grass is turned over during the ploughing operation.

Another version of the Leverage arms gives a red chevron between three hook-like shapes which might be intended for plough shares.<sup>3</sup> A 15<sup>th</sup> century armorial calls the blades *lineriers*.<sup>4</sup>



Praers surname alludes to the Middle English word *prayere* which derives from the French *praerie* and the Latin *partum*, meaning 'meadow' or 'pasture'. Such land was of course managed using a scythe and its use in the family coat of arms is certainly an example of canting arms. One version of the arms has a gold handle, or 'sned'. A version of the arms given in the 15<sup>th</sup> century armorial mentioned above mentions two scythes and in King's *Vale Royal* they are shown crossed. The same implement was borne by the Alcock and Snelston families though the reason is not apparent. Alcock: *Argent, a fess Gules between three scythes Sable*. Snelston: *Argent, a scythe Sable*.

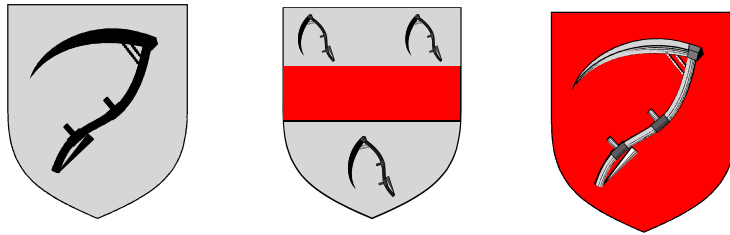
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<sup>1</sup> For an article on canting arms in Cheshire – Rev. E.E.Dorling, 'Canting Arms in Cheshire, *Transactions of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire*, vol. (1912)

<sup>2</sup> J.P.Rylands (ed.), *The Visitation of Cheshire, 1580*, Harleian Society, vol. 18 (1882)

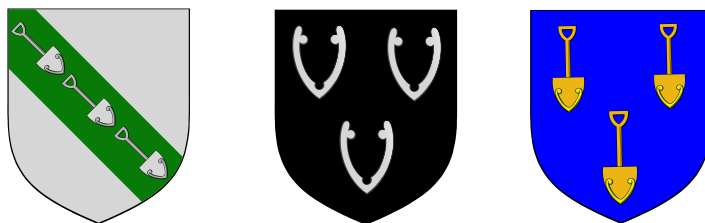
<sup>3</sup> Cheshire Archives and Local Studies (CALs), DDX 364/1.

<sup>4</sup> CALs, DCC 17/1

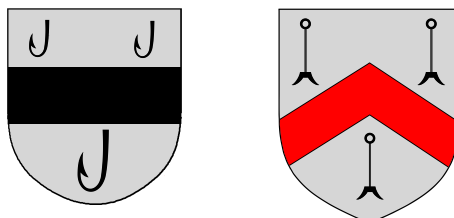


The Staffordshire family name of Sneyd is akin to Middle English *sne*, a long-handled scythe, and the Old English *snaed* a scythe handle. Their arms were as Snelston with the handle diagonally placed (*sinister*) and the blade across the top (*in chief*)

Staying with working the soil, the spade is found in more than a few instances. Swettenham *Argent, on a bend vert three spades of the first* – but then digging could perhaps cause a sweat! Betcheton, depending on which source you use, had both spades, or mattocks, and spade-irons: *Azure, three spades Or*. For a time the Davenport of Henbury used the Betcheton spades having married an heiress of that family.<sup>5</sup> In the late 15<sup>th</sup> century they had *Azure, three spades Argent, garnished Sable*.<sup>6</sup> The Betchetons are also found with *Sable, three spade-irons Argent*, the spade iron being the protective edging to a wooden blade.<sup>7</sup> The Knypersley family from just over the border in Staffordshire had similar arms to Betcheton: *Azure, three wooden spades handles upwards Argent with irons Or*.



A variety of hooks occur with the families of Bosdon and Chaderton. Bosdon bore *Argent a fess between three fish hooks Sable* (see below). Chadderton bore *Argent, a chevron Gules between three flesh-hooks Sable*.

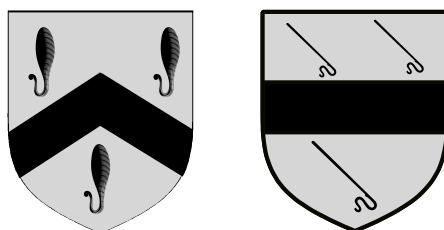


<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

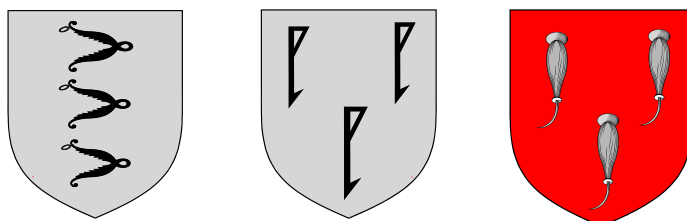
<sup>6</sup> CALS DCC 17/1

<sup>7</sup> CALS, DDX 364/1

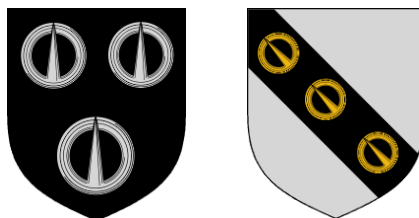
A curious coat of arms is that of Shrigley *Argent, a chevron between three soldering irons Sable*.<sup>1</sup> Why soldering irons – what is the significance? Sir John Bosden is attributed similar arms, *Argent, a fess between three soldering irons Sable*.<sup>8</sup> These soldering irons in some versions of the blazoning seem to be written as ‘wroting liuges’ or ‘wroting rigges’. From their appearance, these items could be interpreted as hooks. and in one version, where the blazon is written in words with symbols to denote the charges, a hook shape is shown perhaps as a crude version of the tool.<sup>9</sup> Curious. Another coat I have come across for Shrigley is *Argent, a fess between three sheep hooks, Sable*.<sup>10</sup> The use of shepherd’s crooks is an unusual charge. Normally the arms of the Shrigley family consist of the lower part of a human leg either as a single item or else three with either a fess or a chevron.



A few more examples are: Barnak, *Argent, three barnacles in pale Sable*; Biddell bore, *Argent, three brackets Sable*; and the Lynsey family bore, *Gules, three awls points downwards Argent*.



The Jodrell family of Cheshire bore *Sable, three buckles Argent* during the reign of Edward III, and Watton, alias Warton, bore, *Argent, on a bend Sable, three round buckles Or*

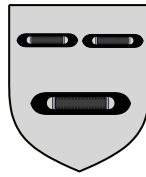


<sup>8</sup> CALS, DAR J/5

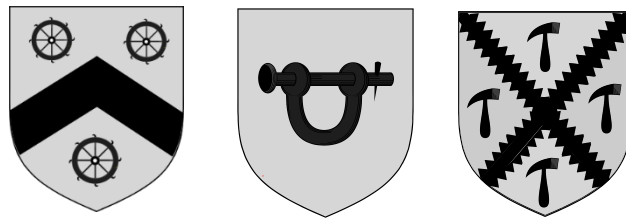
<sup>9</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>10</sup> CALS, DSS 3991/344; DAR J/5

Shakerley had *Argent three weavers' shuttles, Sable.*<sup>11</sup> Somewhat different from the usual arms!



Wheelock of Wheelock – *Argent a chevron between three Catherine wheels sable.* Quite clearly canting arms. Nuthall - *Argent, a shackbolt Sable.* Yowley – *Argent, a saltire indented between four hammers sable.*



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<sup>i</sup> CRO, DCC 17/2

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<sup>11</sup> CALS, DAR J/5