

THE MEDIEVAL HERALDRY IN POTT SHRIGLEY CHURCH

Among the Harleian manuscripts in the British Library are notes on the heraldry that could once be seen in the windows of St Christopher's church, Pott Shrigley.¹ The observations were made on 17 April 1589 by Randle Holmes III of Chester. A few remnants of the glazing he saw can still be seen at the top of the east window, along with a collage of other pieces of medieval glass including the image of St John the Baptist, a patron saint of the chantry established in the church. This paper will consider the heraldry displayed, its significance and the establishment of the chantry.

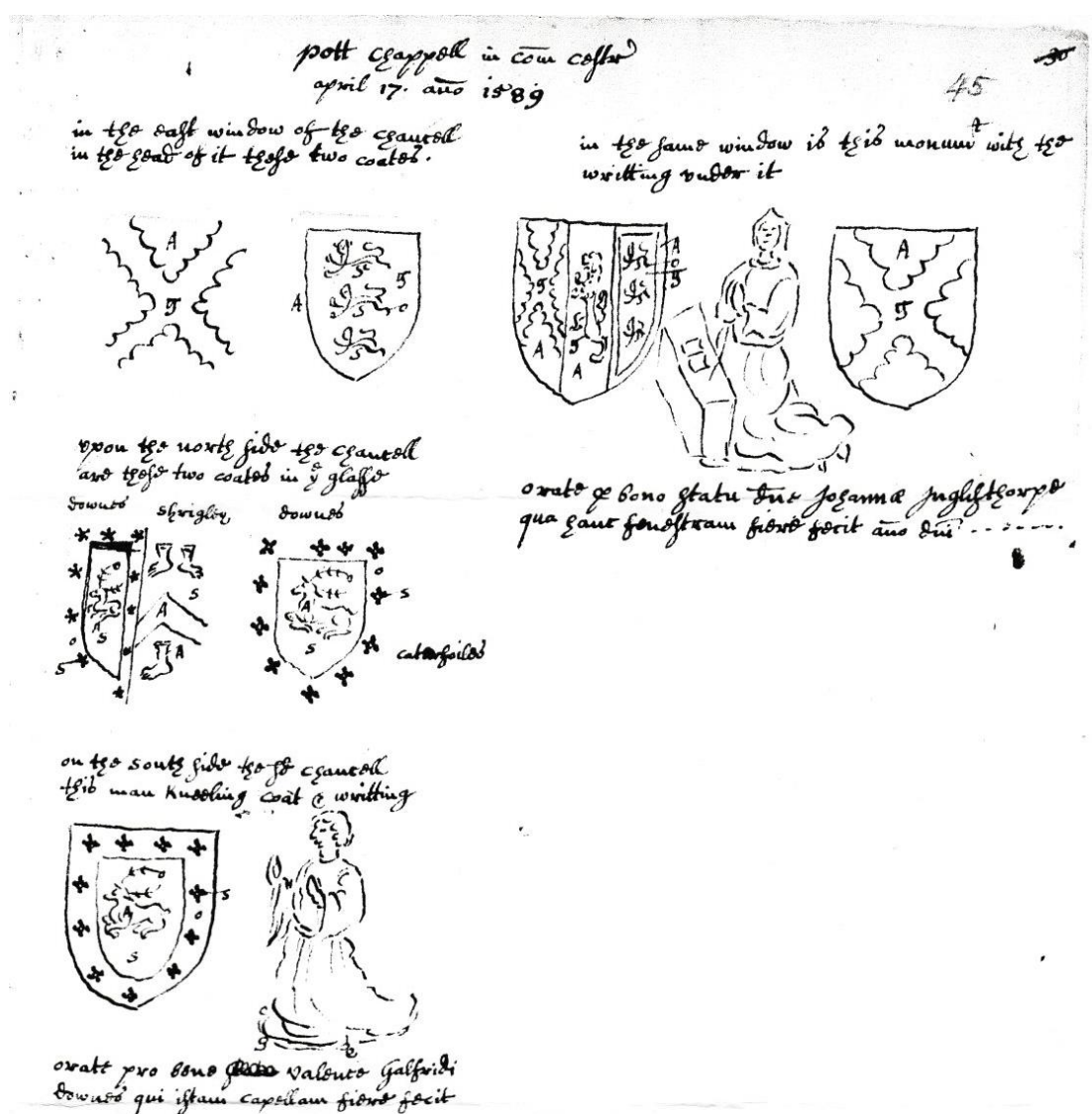


Figure 1. The page from Holmes' church notes referring to Pott Shrigley.

¹ British Library, Harleian Mss, 2151, f. 45.

THE HERALDRY

Holmes' manuscript shows that on the north side of the chancel there was a window which displayed two shield of the arms. First that of Downes and Shrigley impaled: *Sable a stag lodged Argent attired Or, within a bordure Or semée of quatrefoils Sable* (for Downes of Shrigley), impaling, *Sable a chevron Argent between three human legs coupéd at the knee of the second*, (for Shrigley). Also, alongside, the single coat of arms of the Downes family. Clearly these arms are those of the local Downes family who resided at Shrigley Hall.

The arms of Downes also appeared in the window on the opposite side of the chancel alongside the image of a man kneeling at prayer. Beneath were the words: 'Orate pro bono Valente Galfridi Downes qui istam capellam fieri fecit' (Pray for the good and worthy Geoffrey Downes who made this chapel). It was this Geoffrey who, according to his will, dated 7 June 1492, established a chapel of three chantries in the church at Pott Shrigley.² He is believed to be a younger brother of Robert Downes (1445-1495), lord of Shrigley and Worth, in the time of Henry VII.³ The endowment to support the foundation consisted of lands worth about £200 a year.

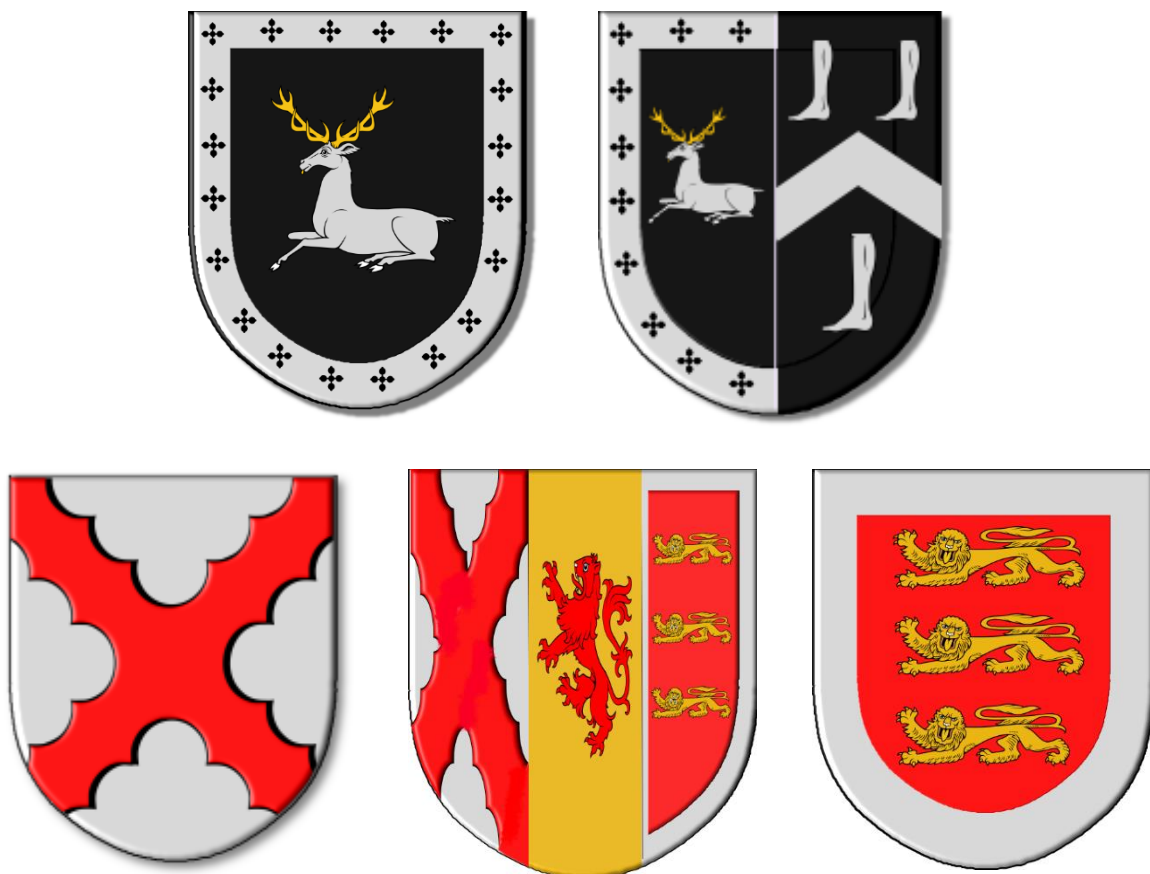


Figure 2. The arms depicted in Holmes' manuscript.
(Holmes recorded the central arms of the tierced coat with a silver field, whereas investigation has revealed it ought to be gold – see below)

² The church is thought to date back to the late fourteenth century and was originally a chapel-of-ease to Prestbury. R. Richards, *Old Cheshire Churches*, p. 278. Geoffrey Downes will is printed in the *Cheshire Sheaf*, 1st series, vol. 2, March 1880, pp. 46-8, 51-2.

³ G. Ormerod, *History of the Palatine and County of Chester*, vol. III, p. 775.

In the east-end window there was a further monument displaying a shield of arms: *Tierced per pale*: 1. *Argent a saltire engrailed Gules* (Tiptoft); 2. *Argent, a lion rampant Gules* (Charleton); and, 3. *Gules, three lions passant guardant in pale Or, within a bordure Argent* (Holland). Also, another shield with *Argent a saltire engrailed Gules* (Tiptoft). Between the two escutcheons there was a picture of a lady kneeling at a prayer desk with the words: 'Orate pro bono statu d'me Johanne Inglithorpe qua hanc fenestram fiere fecit ano Dni'. (Pray for the good state of Lady Joan Inglithorpe who had this window made in the year of the Lord). The date is missing but was probably about 1490.

In this same window of the chancel there were two shields with the basic arms of Tiptoft and Holland in separate shields. The arms of Holland can still to be seen at the top of the east window. Curiously alongside it is a shield with what appears to be a red lion, though Holmes does not actually record such a shield, yet, its presence would make sense as will be explained.

The presence of the arms of Downes and Shrigley in the windows need no explanation being those of local families, but those in the east and south windows need some explanation.

DAME JOAN INGLISTHORPE

Geoffrey's co-founder of the chapel was Dame Joan Inglithorpe (c.1425-1494), (variously spelled or Ingoldsthorpe, Ingaldesthorp and other variations), a name with Cambridgeshire and Norfolk origins. Her maiden name was Tiptoft and the shield of arms bearing the red saltire are of that family and occur in the east window and as the first third of the arms in the south window. She was the second daughter of Sir John Tiptoft, first baron Tiptoft, of Burwell, Cambridgeshire, and Langar, Nottinghamshire. He was at various times Knight of the Shire for Huntingdonshire and Somerset, Speaker of the House of Commons, Treasurer of the Household, Chief Butler of England, Treasurer of the Exchequer, and Seneschal of Landes and Aquitaine. Her brother was John Tiptoft (1427 –1470), 1st Earl of Worcester, a nobleman and scholar, who became Lord High Treasurer, Lord High Constable and Deputy Governor of Ireland. He was known as "the Butcher of England" due to the severity with which he dealt with Lancastrian supporters on behalf of Edward IV. He was executed on 18 October 1470 and his effigy is to be seen in Ely Cathedral.

Joan married, in 1435, Sir Edmund Ingoldsthorpe (c1421 – 1456), of Burgh Green and Sawston, Cambridgeshire.⁴ She had an only daughter, Isabel, wife of John Neville, earl Montague on 25 April 1457, when aged fourteen.⁵ Following Edmund's death, she married

⁴ She was said to have been over 60 years of age in 1485-6 according to her cousin Edward's *inquisition post mortem*. See Maskelyne and H. C. Maxwell Lyte, 'Inquisitions Post Mortem, Henry VII, Entries 1-50', in *Calendar of Inquisitions Post Mortem: Series 2, Volume 1, Henry VII* (London, 1898), pp. 1-22. *British History Online* <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/inquis-post-mortem/series2-vol1/pp1-22> [accessed 18 February 2018].

⁵ J.W.Clay (ed.), *Visitation of Cambridgeshire, 1575*, Harleian Society vol. xli (1895), p. 124.

Thomas Grey, first baron of Richemount Grey. Their marriage took place about 1459 and did not last long as he was executed in 1461. She seems not to have taken his name and continued to be known as Ingoldsthorpe for the rest of her life.

When she died on 21 June 1494, Joan was a very wealthy woman who possessed lands and manors in twelve counties. Some of her property in Middlesex, once the property of her nephew Edmund Sutton, baron Dudley (1460-1531), had already passed to Geoffrey's use in November 1494.⁶ The trustees of this 'use' were John Fynyeux, William Sutton, clerk, Richard Sutton, Geoffrey Downes, and James Downes, clerk.⁷

Her will, proved on 18 July, requested that she be buried at Blackfriars, London, where the body of her brother John was interred.⁸ She mentions members of the Downs family: Joan, Margery and Maud, who each received ten marks (£6 13s 8d) and appointed Geoffrey as one of her overseers and the beneficiary of what remained of her estate (the other overseers were William Sutton, Doctor of Divinity and William Rocheford of Blackfriars, Doctor of Divinity. Geoffrey's life-time interest in lands in Middlesex was confirmed and was to pass to the use of 'pott chappelle', of which she was 'foundress', for two years after his death. An interesting feature of her will are the bequests of money to buy bread for the poor prisoners of Newgate, Ludgate, the King's Bench and the Marshalsea.

What then of her relationship with Geoffrey Downes? How did she come to meet him? What led her to become involved in establishing the chantry? Did she ever visit Pott Shrigley? Intriguing questions we just can't answer. It has been suggested that she was married to him, but this does not seem to be the case based on the way in which each of them is referred to in their respective wills.

THE TIERCED ARMS

The triple impaled coat recorded by Holmes is something of a puzzle. Normally such a combination comprised of a gentleman's arms in the centre with those of his wives on either side. However, assuming Holmes' copying is correct, in this instance I don't believe that such an arrangement is the case.

The first section is clearly Tiptoft – Joan's paternal family. The central arms, *Argent a lion rampant Gules* seems to be for the Legh family of West Hall, High Legh, Cheshire, but an examination of their pedigrees makes this very unlikely. It seems that the tincture of the field is wrong and ought to be gold – the arms of the Barons Charleton. This family had been lords of Powys during the medieval period until, in 1421, lack of a male heir resulted in the castle

⁶ Cambridgeshire, Essex, Herefordshire, Huntingdonshire, Kent, Leicestershire, Middlesex, Northamptonshire, Shropshire, Suffolk, Wiltshire, Worcestershire. See Maskelyne and H. C. Maxwell Lyte, 'Inquisitions Post Mortem, Henry VII, Entries 1051-1150', in *Calendar of Inquisitions Post Mortem: Series 2, Volume 1, Henry VII* (London, 1898), pp. 452-504. *British History Online* <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/inquis-post-mortem/series2-vol1/pp452-469> [accessed 18 February 2018].

⁷ 'Inquisitions Post Mortem, Henry VII, Entry 1092'.

⁸ PRO: prob/11/10. Will of Joan Ingaldesthorp.

and estate being divided between two daughters, Joan and Joyce, who respectively, married Sir John Grey of Powys and Sir John Tiptoft – Joan's father.

The arms in the third section, the three gold lions and the silver border, were born by Edmund Plantagenet, son of Edward II in the first half of the 14th century and then later adopted, through marriage by the Hollands and then borne by Edmund Holland, 4th earl of Kent, 5th baron Holland (d.1408). Joan's father-in-law, Sir John Grey of Ruthin (d.1439) married Constance Holland (d.1437), daughter of John Holland, duke of Exeter, and widow of Thomas Mowbray, 4th earl of Norfolk. Joan's brother-in-law, Edmund Grey (1416–1490) became earl of Kent in 1465. So, it seems that the third section relates to Joan's second husband.

It appears that Joan Inglithorpe intended this window to be a memorial to her father's family and the allied families of Grey and Holland, but, as already said, the emblazoning by the glaziers is not without error, unless the gold tincture faded over time. Why did she not include the arms of her late husband, Sir Edmund, whose name she continued to use? Coincidentally his arms were the opposite of her paternal arms being: *Gules a saltire engrailed Argent*.

THE CHANTRY

The details contained within Geoffrey's will are particularly interesting as regards the arrangements for the running his chapel or chantry.⁹ Given the size of the church it is likely that rather than being an enclosed chapel within the body of the church, it was probably a specific area with an altar. This would be dedicated to Geoffrey's favourite saint or saints and set aside for the performance of the special duties of the appointed priest or priests. The establishment of this chantry was not only intended for the Downes family but the greater good of the community as a fraternity was established so that prayers could be offered for those who enrolled, for welfare purposes, and the teaching of local children

All the profits of his lands and tenements in Cheshire were to be used by his trustees for the purpose of funding two priests to officiate in his chapel. His brother Robert Downes and his heirs were to also appoint a 'discreet and well disposed' priest to perform daily services at the altar of 'Our Lady'. This priest was to be funded by Geoffrey and Dame Joan and was to pray for their souls and those of the 'Bretheren' whose names were recorded in a book. What follows seems to apply only to the priest appointed by Robert, unless otherwise stated.

If the priest was to be replaced for whatever reason, or dismissed, then the 'Sadest' (most serious) men of the chapelry, and the vicar of Prestbury, were to advise Robert on his dismissal and the finding of a suitable replacement within thirteen weeks. The appointed priest was not to be related to any person of influence within Cheshire, so that if he were unsuitable and had to be 'put out' there would be no one to cause an issue on his behalf. Whilst the position remained vacant any money that would have gone to pay for the priest was to be used to repair the chapel. The appointed priest was to be legally bound with sureties to take his board and

⁹ *Cheshire Sheaf*, First series, vol. 2, March 1880, pp. 46-8, 51-2.

lodgings only within Pott Shrigley and to take care of all the robes, vestments and ornaments. He was to sing daily in praise of the Virgin Mary and St John, to and say *de profundis* (a penitential psalm in commemorations of the dead) for Geoffrey, Joan and the brethren at the 'Lavatory' (font). On the feast of Our Lady and the five feasts of Our Lord the priest was to set a candle before both the image of the Virgin Mary and St. John, and to read the scripture that belonged to that day.

A priest was to 'keep noe horse, noe Hawke, ne Hound, ne nothing that should destroy, or lett him from the service of God', in case he didn't attend to his books, writing, teaching children or other 'virtuous occupations'. He was also to wear his gown and hood at all times. When Robert or his family were too ill to attend the chapel then the priest was required to attend on them to say Mass twice a week at their home in Shrigley or Worth. The priest was to urge the congregation to pray for Geoffrey and Joan and the brothers and sisters recorded in his book and, on the first Sunday in Lent, he was to read out the names of all the brothers and sisters. Failure to do any of things would render the priest liable to dismissal. The two fraternity priests could also be dismissed if he engaged in telling tales about parishioners or becoming involved in 'gruge or debate between neighbours'. Priests were forbidden from hearing confessions of any man or woman they knew to have sinned and were continuing in that sin – presumably meaning those living together unmarried.

Geoffrey included a clause which reads , 'if any man make any fray in the s'd Chappel, or in the s'd Chappel yard, or els lye in wayte for to hurt or Distrouble any man or woman coming to the s'd Chappel to hear the Service of GOD, or for any other good intent, or els goeing fro ye s'd Chappel, that then hee or y'e, that soe doth, fall in the Censure of the Church'. Whether there was a realistic prospect of this happening we do not know, but clearly he anticipated it and made such offences subject to the jurisdiction of the church courts, rather than the local courts.

The times of service were declared in the will. Matins was to be between 7am and 8am, after the bell had been rung, with Mass being said after 8am. Evensong was between 4pm and 5pm on holidays and during the summer and between 3 and 4 during the winter. Every Tuesday the 'great Bell' would be rung at 4pm and 6pm, and the following day there would be a requiem Mass for the founders and the souls of departed brethren and sisters of the fraternity, and for the welfare of those still alive. Specific prayers were mentioned for the masses to be said for the Virgin and St. John.

If the 'great bell' were to break then Robert Downes and the brethren were required to have ale brewed and sold for the purpose of repair. If the amount raised was insufficient then money from the lands assigned to the pay the priests would be used and the priest paid from whatever could be sold, but for no more than a year.

The priest appointed by Robert was to have £5 6s 8d a year and those of the fraternity 10s a year between them to be spent on bread and wine. If a priest became 'blind or lame' so that he could not perform his duties he was to have forty shillings a year for life – a generous pension.

In case Robert Downes did not comply with his instructions of appointing priests then the responsibility was to fall to Sir Peter Legh, presumably Legh of Lyme (1453- 1527). Should he also fail then Sir John Warren of Poynton (1461-1518) and failing him the Bishop of Chester.

The will was to be read aloud to the congregation on Whitsunday between Mass and Matins.

It seems that Geoffrey had a library at Pott Shrigley for he states that if Robert or his family were to borrow a book, other than the 'Mass book', to read or copy then he might have for up to thirteen weeks and give security for its return.

The 'Brotherhood of Mary and St John', or fraternity, mentioned in the will was open to all parishioners – men, women and children. They could join on paying 6s 8d, which could be paid for in instalments if the applicant earned less than forty shillings a year: priests had to pay ten shillings to join. Entry in the fraternity could be made posthumously by their remaining relatives.

The chantry remained active until the suppression of the chantries in 1548 when the three priests were named as Richard Thirlewind, Raffe Rawshawe and Hugh Currier (or Turner). The last two received pensions when the chantry was dissolved, the first presumably remaining as the parish priest.



Figure 3. Pott Shrigley church

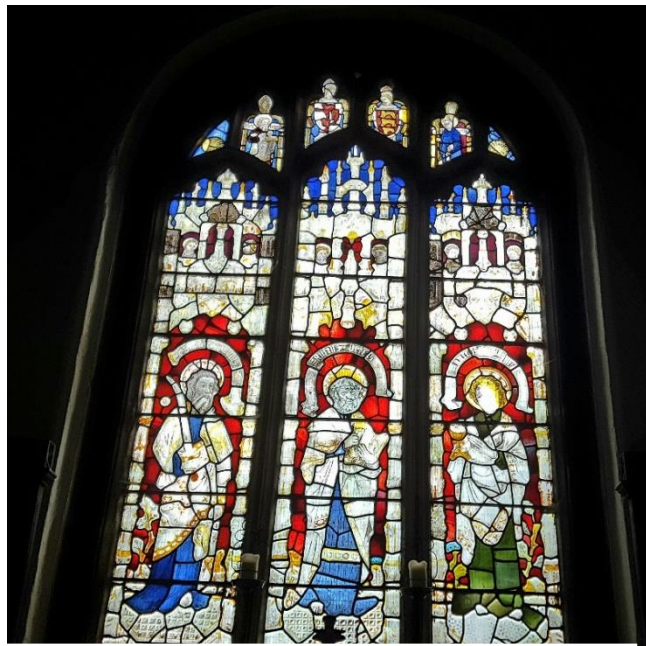


Figure 4. The east window at Pott Shrigley.



Figure 5. Detail from the top of the east window showing some of the original stained glass.