LIVERY BADGES AND PERSONAL BADGES IN EARLY TUDOR WORK AT CHEDDON FITZPAINE AND STAPLE FITZPAINE

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The exteriors of many medieval Churches in Somerset are rich in those carved heads (human or fantastic), beasts, figures and devices of which the significance is too often ignored. The Victorians were scarcely interested in them, classing the greater number as gargoyles — the term used with amused contempt to describe all gothic carvings protruding from the outer walls of ecclesiastical and secular buildings and having no obvious meaning — whereas true gargoyles, designed for the discharge of rain-water from leaded roof-tops, constitute only a small proportion of the series. The majority of such carvings are the decoration of corbels, which had, more often than not, been introduced for decorative rather than structural reasons.

A wide variety of *motifs* was employed. When, for instance, a Church was concerned, if the patron of the living or a donor was of the status to make use of badges on banners and liveries, these emblems were a happy source of inspiration to the sculptors. Although comparatively few great families were closely connected with Somerset, it will be remembered that the Hungerfords, the Courtenays, the Luttrells, the Daubeneys, and above all the Percys as heirs to the inheritance of Poynings, Fitzpaine and de Bryan, had a footing in the county.

"The badge", wrote the late H. Stanford London, "was rather a mark of ownership or allegiance, as distinct from arms and crest, which were for a man's own wear, declaring his identity to all who saw them". ("There are of course usages which will not fit into that frame".) "The badge's most important and distinctive use was for displaying on the lord's standard in the field and on the liveries of his retainers". "As a decorative *motif* it was used in countless manners and places. But however and wherever used, it was with rare exceptions boldly drawn and instantly recognizable, like the Percy crescent, the Beaufort portcullis, or the rose, thistle and shamrock which still adorn the tunics of the Yeoman of the Guard".[1]

1 *Royal Beasts*, published by the Heraldry Society, 1956, H. Stanford London, *p.* 4.

The Percy crescent, enclosing the terret or shacklebolt, is represented twice on a parapet of the Church of Cheddon Fitzpaine where it is shown on shields as though it were the charge of a coat of arms — surely one of those heraldic abuses which the early Tudor heralds were anxious to correct. It is also to be seen in the same Church on two bench ends which seem to date from *c.* 1520. The crescent was almost always silvered, but occasionally it was gilded. When the badges were combined, the space between the horns of the crescent was divided by a vertical line and coloured black and red, and the terret, placed on this particoloured background, was generally gilded, or at any rate of a yellow colour. The effect of the combined badges thus tinctured somewhat resembles a bruised face, and in the north, 'Lord Northumberland's Arms' (*sic*) is or was a synonym for a pair of black eyes. Perhaps the most interesting story connected with the crescent badge is that told of the fourth earl of Northumberland's share in promoting the accession of Henry VII. It is stated that "as Richard III left Leicester the day before the battle of Bosworth, a poor old blind man, who sat begging by the bridge, cried out that if the moon changed twice that day king Richard would lose both life and crown. The moon in the heavens did change that day and was followed by the crescent on earth". Northumberland remained inactive on the field and Crouchback fell.[2]

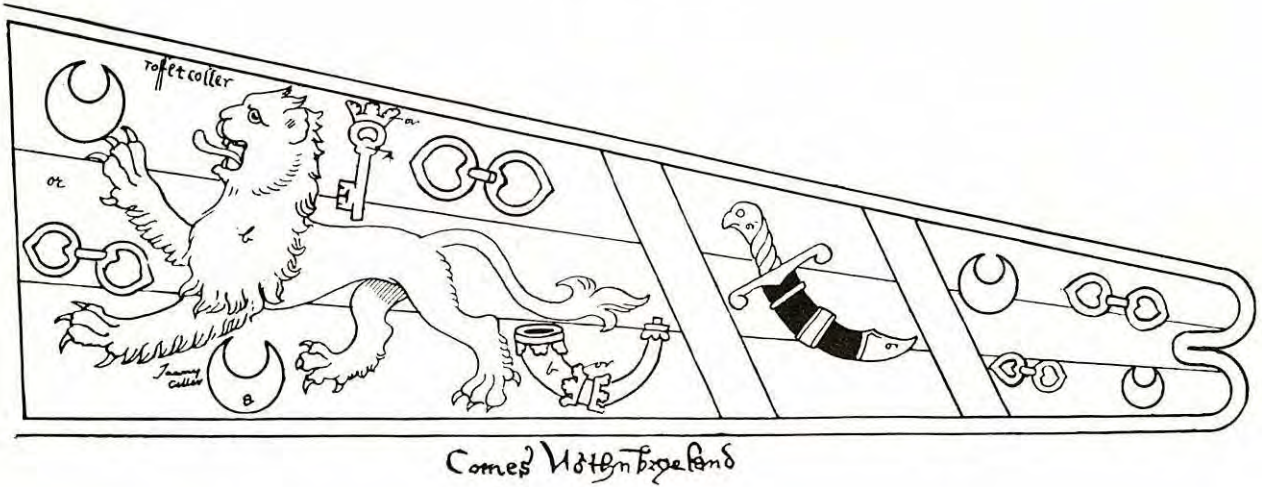
Mr. London wrote further: "A point, I think, hitherto unremarked is that there were two kinds of badge. The one, a 'beast' was painted large upon the standard towards the staff. The other, which was apt to be some object of simpler outline, was smaller and was powdered over the field of the flag. May we guess that this was what the servants and retainers wore and that the beast was somewhat more personal in its use? The idea is tempting but the evidence is scanty."[3] In the same paragraph, discussing examples of a creature serving both as beast and crest, he instances the Blue Lion of Percy, or, as it is generally called, 'the Blue Lion of Louvain'.

The most important seat in Somerset, inherited by the Percys through Eleanor Poynings, was Stogursey castle, but according to Collinson there was also a house of some consequence at Staple

2 *The Old Heraldry of the Percys*, W. Hylton Dyer Longstaffe, *Archaeologia Aeliana, IV*, 196. (1860)

3 London, *op. cit.* 5.

PLATE VII



BANNER OF THE FIFTH EARL OF NORTHUMBERLAND
(From *Banners, Standards and Badges* De Walden Library, 1904)

Badges: Lion of Louvain, Crescents and Fetterlocks of Percy, Crowned Key of Poynings, Bugle horn of de Bryan and Falchion of Fitzpaine.

Fitzpaine. If the family ever spent time on their estates in the west, that house is likely to have been more habitable than a castle which, as far as is known, had remained unmodernised for over a century. It is possible that Eleanor Poynings retreated to Somerset after the death of her husband, the third earl of Northumberland, at the battle of Towton in 1461, and she may have remained here during the attainder and until her son was released from the Tower of London in 1469. Collinson informs us that the manor house at Staple "existed till the reign of Henry VIII when it was almost destroyed by fire", and that "many ruins of the old mansion are visible in the orchard". The ruins have now entirely disappeared. The existence of a manorial deer park of considerable extent, for which there is abundant evidence, indicates the importance attached to Staple by its owners.[3A] The house stood near the Church the tower of which was regarded by the late Kenneth Wickham as one of the three finest in the county. "There is a mastery and beauty of design", he wrote, "in the towers of Ile Abbots, Staple Fitzpaine and Kingston which renders them among the greatest masterpieces of English architecture".[4] This is high praise, but the argument is ably sustained in the context.

Below the parapet of the tower at Staple, there are eight huge corbels of Ham Hill stone, projecting from the wall-face as much as three to four feet. They are carved in the form of beasts. The blocks must have been selected with great care for the stone is often very friable: although the carvings are weathered, they remain in a tolerable state of preservation. There is an unsophisticated bravura in their treatment in striking contrast to the easy and conventional mastery of the other carved stone-work of the tower.[5]

Here, at Staple, it might be expected that the sculptors would not merely have chosen but have been directed to represent the

3A *Staple Fitzpaine and the Forest of Neroche*, R. A. Sixsmith, *p.* 32.

4 *Churches of Somerset*, A. K. Wickham, *p.* 45. Kingston St. Mary is intended.

5 At Ile Abbots, the statues surviving in the niches on the tower, and which appear to be enlarged copies or versions of Nottingham alabasters of the early fifteenth century, are also curiously unsophisticated. English sculpture had reached a low ebb in the decades before the reformation, or possibly there was "a deliberate revulsion of local sculptors against the humanistic art of the previous three hundred years". *cf. Sculpture in Britain*, Pelican History of Art, Lawrence Stone, *p.* 220.

beasts of the house of Percy. Henry Algernon, fifth earl of Northumberland, lord Poynings, Fitzpaine and Bryan, had a personal herald and is known to have made lavish use of badges for various purposes. For instance, when he went to the siege of Térouenne, two standards were included in the equipment; and "five gideholmes of sarcenet with my lord's device and word with sundry beasts and sundry powderings" were provided "for my lord's five captains, viz. to every hundred men a gideholme". On the same occasion, there were purchased "white crescents set upon red and black paper for my lord's servants' lodgings; 470 coats of plain white cloth guarded with green cloth, for my lord's soldiers and carriagemen; 100 coats of white cloth guarded with green and embroidered for my lord's guard; 940 roses, as crosses (*sic*) of red buckram, with as many white crescents to them, for to set upon the aforesaid coats of cloth;" also, 46 neck cloths of red and black tapestry with crescents upon them for "my lord's draught horses". "Three chaplains that went over with my lord" were given gowns of red cloth, and they too wore the Percy crescent. Two running footmen had short coats of red and black velvet with 4 "riche cressaunts and turrets of baskett worke", and for alternative wear, 2 short coats of red and black damask with 4 "cressaunts with turretts of Venys silver". The combined badges, as we known them at Cheddon, are only mentioned in connection with the footmen though the standards, as shown elsewhere, have them as "powderings".[6]

The date of the tower at Staple was considered by Kenneth Wickham to have been *c.* 1485, but the tower builders, who it is inferred were specialists, learned in the art of combating the strains and stresses to which bell-towers are subject, were, as Wickham observed, notoriously conservative in their choice of architectural detail, and in the absence of documentary evidence, it is not easy to determine the date at which any particular tower was erected: there appears to be no documentary evidence relating to the erection of this tower. Wickham's dating is within the tenure of the fourth earl of Northumberland, who was murdered in 1489. In the present writer's view it appears probable that the addition of the great corbels and the corona was delayed for some years. Henry Algernon was only twelve years old when his father died: he lived until 1527.

6 Longstaffe, *op. cit.*, 202-209.

The detail of the corona at Kingston St. Mary is not inconsistent with the date — *c.* 1490 — suggested by Wickham for the building of the tower although the pattern of the pierced parapet would then have been more 'new-fangled' than the patterns used for the carving at the west doorway and on the hooding of the niches. Possibly the tower builders handed over to other masons when the solid structure was completed. At Ile Abbots, where the suggested date is *c.* 1480, the corona, which is assumed to have been exactly reproduced in the Victorian reconstruction, has the same peculiarities, and seems contemporary with the tower; but at Staple, the pierced work of the parapet has a distinctly later character, and is appropriate to the second decade of the sixteenth century — the period indicated by identification of the particular beasts carved there on the great corbels.

I

In the centre of the west side of the tower is a lion. It is true that lions occur on many towers for scriptural reasons and for their associations as recorded in the medieval bestiaries, but here, seen in conjunction with the other corbels, we may presume that this large beast is the Blue Lion of Louvain, the beast *par excellence* of the house of Percy, which stalks among his livery badges on Henry Algernon's standard.[7] In the reign of Henry I, Joscelin of Louvain, brother of the king's second wife, married Agnes de Percy. Although there is said to be no evidence earlier than the time of Edward I associating the blue lion with Joscelin, nevertheless, in the dawn of heraldry, it may have been his cognizance. The sons of Joscelin and Agnes assumed their mother's name.

II

The lion is flanked at the south west corner of the tower by a huge creature, recognizable by its deeply serrated horns not merely

[7] *Banners, Standards and Badges*, De Walden Library, 1904, *p.* 258. This work "purports to reproduce the drawings in College of Arms MS. 1, 2, but there are many small inaccuracies".
There is a spirited series of lion corbels at Kingston St. Mary, and a series of beasts at Ile Abbots, which includes a lion over the west door and an antelope at the south west corner of the tower, a juxtaposition which may have suggested the arrangement at Staple. Both at Kingston and at Ile Abbots, as indeed on many other towers, the beasts appear to have only their normal bestiary symbolism. *cf. Bosses in the Chancel Roof of Queen Camel Church*, G. C. Druce, *S.A.S.*, *LXXXIII*, 89-106.

as a bestiary antelope but, in that it is gorged with a coronet and chained, as a heraldic or a personal beast. At Cheddon, Henry Algernon or his herald caused the livery badge — the Stafford knot — of his brother-in-law, Edward, duke of Buckingham, to be carved on one of the shields in the parapet where it may be seen in proximity to the crescent and terret,[8] and it is suggested that at Staple he directed that Buckingham's beast, the Silver Antelope of Bohun, gorged with a golden coronet and chained gold, should be placed with his own family-beasts.[9] The marriage contract of his elder sister, Eleanor, to Edward Stafford was dated 14 December 1490. If a legend lay behind the cult of the antelope (through Henry IV's queen, Mary Bohun, the chief beast of the house of Lancaster), it cannot have rivalled in romantic interest the legend of the swan, a badge also appropriated by the Bohuns, which has been so ably dealt with by Mr. Anthony Wagner, Richmond Herald, in *The Swan Badge and the Swan Knight*.[10] On the extinction of the house of Lancaster, the Staffords regarded themselves as the representatives of the Bohuns on account of their descent from Edmund of Woodstock and Eleanor, daughter of Humphrey, earl of Hereford.

III

At the north west corner, the beast which bursts from the tower appears to be a horse. It is more weathered than any other in the series, but the hoofs are clearly discernible. The mane is massive and crined. We suggest that it was intended for the White Horse of Fitzalan in honour of William Fitzalan, twenty first earl of Arundel, who married Henry Algernon's younger sister, Ann.[11] The marriage

8 A single ermine spot is to be seen on another of these shields — perhaps yet another livery badge; and an unusual knot appears twice on bench-ends within the Church as well as a double-headed eagle displayed, which may here also stand for a livery badge. The design of the iron handle-plate of the early sixteenth century door is a composition of four crescents addorsed. The Ham Hill stone pulpit of the same Church is of the same period, and is richly decorated with shields which were probably emblazoned.

9 *B. S. & B., p.* 26. The sculptor's treatment of the off hind leg of the antelope, the outline of which is incised in the flat course of stone below the parapet, may be taken as an example of the reversion to the primitive observed by Lawrence Stone, *op. cit. Vide, fn.* 5.

10 Now Sir Anthony Wagner, K.C.V.O., Garter King-at-Arms. See *Archaeologia, XCVII*, 127-138.

11 *B. S. & B.*, 175.

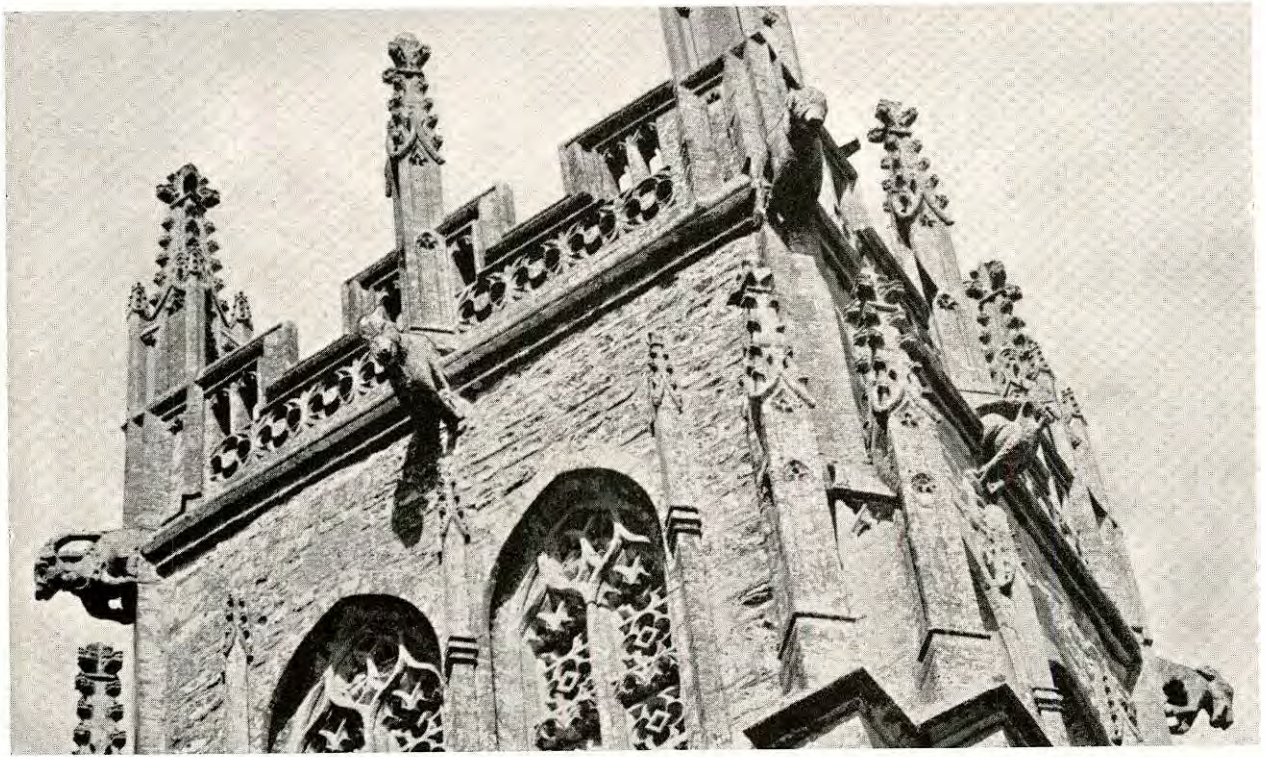


Photo: J. Beale

STAPLE FITZPAINE CHURCH TOWER *Beasts* (from left to right):
II. Antelope (S.W. corner) VIII. Yale (South) VII. Boar (S.E. corner)
VI. Griffin (East) and V. Bull (N.E. corner)

did not take place until February 1511. Thus, if the identification and attribution of the antelope and the horse are accepted, the date of the great corbels may be placed between 1511 and 1521 — the year of Buckingham's execution.

IV

In the centre of the north side and adjacent to the staircase turret, there is a representation of a most hideous beast. It has hoofs which are shown as cloven. The lips are drawn back displaying square teeth, and the expression of the face is malignant. The creature may be intended for a camel, a beast attributed to "ye Earle of Worster" by the seventeenth century antiquary, John Bagford, whose list of badges is given in Larwood and Hotton's *History of Sign Boards*.[12] Whether a camel was among the Beaufort badges and included on account of the Beaufort descent of Henry Algernon's wife, Catherine Spencer, does not appear. A beast, however, to represent Fitzpaine seems to be missing from the series: a tentative suggestion that the camel was used for this purpose can only be put forward with reserve. The black-sheathed falchion of Fitzpaine was among the badges on Henry Algernon's banner, and was displayed also on one of his guydons, but the writer is by no means satisfied that the Fitzpaines used a beast as a badge, nor has he found a description of any Fitzpaine crest.

V

The figure of a bull with large ears and resembling the bulls as drawn in *Banners, Standards and Badges*, juts from the north east corner. Here we may see the Black Bull of Clarence for Hotspur's wife, Elizabeth Mortimer, or far less probably, the Pied Bull of Raby for Eleanor Neville, wife of Henry, second earl of Northumberland. The dignity of the Black Bull of Clarence as a badge has been recognized continuously to the present day.[13]

VI

At the east centre is a creature with the head, wings and legs of an eagle, which may be assumed to represent the griffin generally

12 pp. 133, 134. The authors appear to quote from *Harl. Mss.*, 5910.

13 London, *op. cit.* 25-27.

attributed to the de Bryans.[14] Henry Algernon's claim to the barony of Bryan was considered doubtful not many years since, but although his use of the title of 'lord Fitzpaine' was not justified, there can be no doubt that he was correct in styling himself 'lord Bryan'.[15] The deed of agreement relating to the de Bryan estates, dated December 1488, gave the Percys only a small interest in the Somerset property, but their share was subsequently amplified.[16] Their chief inheritance from the de Bryans was in South Wales.

VII

The beast at the south east corner is a boar gorged with a coronet and chained, and having handsome tusks. Two guydons of Henry Algernon are illustrated in *Banners, Standards and Badges*, coupled together, with the name 'Poynings' written above them.[17] The Unicorn of Poynings is shown on the upper guydon, and on the lower a silver boar collared and chained, and it is suggested that here at Staple the boar stands for Poynings. According to Longstaffe, the supporters on Henry Algernon's Garter Plate are "A silver boar ducally gorged and chained in gold, and a silver unicorn similarly gorged and chained".[18] Although the unicorn was and is generally regarded as the chief beast of Poynings, there may have been good reason for its not being placed on the tower at Staple: Sir Edward Poynings (1459 - 1521), the representative of the family in the male line, used the unicorn as the beast on his standard,[19] and relations

14 *B. M. Seals*, Birch, 11,575. There is some doubt whether the seal, the supporters of which are regarded as the source of the Griffin of Bryan, was that of sir Guy de Bryan, K.G., lord Bryan, or of his son, sir Guy de Bryan, who died *v.p.*

15 It appears that sir Robert Fitzpaine, whose daughter, Isabel, married the fourth lord Poynings, was not summoned to parliament as lord Fitzpaine. He was son of sir Robert de Grey of Codnor and Elizabeth his wife, sister of the previous sir Robert Fitzpaine who had indeed been summoned as lord Fitzpaine to parliaments of Edward III. The claim to the barony rested with the heirs of his daughter, Isabel, who married sir John Chidiock. It is now established that Elizabeth, wife of sir Robert Fitzpaine formerly Grey, was daughter of sir Guy de Bryan, K.G., lord Bryan, and not his sister as was formerly supposed.

16 *S.A.S., CIII*, 60.

17 *B. S. & B.*, 175.

18 Longstaffe, *op. cit.*, 203.

19 *B. S. & B.*, 107.

with him had been strained when the de Bryan estates were divided in 1488, and there were subsequent negotiations in connection with certain manors.

VIII

In the centre on the south side, a place of honour in relation to the south door of the Church and very conspicuous, there is the head and neck of a goat-like beast with a well-defined beard below the chin. This creature, on inspection from the roof of the tower, is found to have had a pair of horns which seem to have been bent backward but which have long since been broken off. In spite of its pensive expression, it may stand for the White Yale of Beaufort.[20] Yales as represented in the fifteenth century had been notable for the ferocity of their appearance, but the yales, placed by Torrigiano at the feet of lady Margaret Beaufort's effigy in Henry VII's Chapel, are singularly mild: they must be of approximately the same date as the beast at Staple. Henry Algernon's wife, Catherine Spencer, whom he seems to have married just after 1500, was granddaughter and senior representative of Edmund Beaufort, duke of Somerset.

These notes show little more than the interest attached to certain representations of livery badges and personal badges to be seen in carved work on the exterior of two Somerset Churches, and that is indeed their primary object; but the writer wishes to point out that there is reason to think crests as well as badges were employed elsewhere in the county in similar positions. The carvings at the east and west corners of porches, as well as on the exteriors of aisles built to house chantries, are worth particular examination in a search for heraldic insignia. But by far the greater number of sculptures, classed by the Victorians as gargoyles, are of a different character. There are many grotesques, but it is never safe to dismiss even these fantasies as meaningless figments of the sculptors' imagination: we may instance the Green Man — a *motif* with complex associations — which is found not infrequently. *Genre* figures too are common: among them a man with inflated cheeks playing the bagpipes may often be observed — clearly a familiar sight which appealed to the humour of the age. Here and there it is possible that local folklore, or the legend of a local saint, provided a subject. Portrait-masks of extraordinary naturalism, which are to be seen on the exteriors of so many Churches, though they are of course even

20 *London, op. cit*, 33-37.

more often found on corbels within the buildings, have been the subject of strangely little attention. Whether they were produced without the aid of life-masks — a method of securing a likeness which may have been practiced much more widely than is generally supposed — remains a mystery. A face of this order, gazing serenely over the broad acres of a parish from a position near the summit of a tower, is perhaps more likely to have been that of the lord of the local manor than that of the builder-architect, but masks of builder-architects may occur. A mask of unmistakably clerical type often survives on a turret or a parapet and is presumably that of the priest in possession of the living when the building was erected. In conclusion, the writer wishes to stress that these varied sculptures provide wide scope for local research in the workings of the medieval mind and of the mind of the early renaissance from evidence which hitherto has been surprisingly neglected.

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