

NOTE ON AN ANCIENT LEATHER CASE FROM  
SWEFFLING CHURCH, SUFFOLK.

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Recently, when in Suffolk, I chanced to see in an old oak chest in the vestry of Sweffling Church, near Saxmundham, an ancient leather case, or bottle-cover, which, with permission of the Rector, the Rev. G. C. Rivett-Carnac, was submitted for the inspection of the Society through the Honorary Secretary, Mr. Vincent Redstone.

He has now been good enough to send me excellent photographs of the case, and to invite me to add a note on the subject, which is gladly submitted by me, as a new member who is very pleased to contribute, even in a small way, to the interests of the Society.

As the leather cover is still with the Secretary and there are only the photographs and my memory to help me, I am unable to describe it in detail, and must ask Mr. Redstone to give details of the measurements, and other particulars of this interesting specimen.

The case is evidently intended to hold and carry a bottle, and was probably used for taking sacramental wine from and to the Rectory. The material and workmanship both indicate that the cover is of great age. No information regarding its history was available on the spot, the clerk, an old resident, being only able to say that it had remained unnoticed in the chest so long as he could remember. I am not aware whether similar leather cases are known in the East Anglian Churches?

The chief interest of the specimen is in its workmanship. The leather has been elaborately "tooled," all available space being ornamented with scrolls, grotesques, and armorial shields. These latter are five in number on the top of the cover, and certain of them are reproduced



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on the body of the case. Although the outlines are good enough, unfortunately the tinctures of the coats are not indicated. Were these available, there might be little difficulty in recognising the families represented. Further, unfortunately, the charges in several of the shields are somewhat common ones, thus rendering identification all the more difficult. Still the combination of five coats may be of assistance in determining the family of the owner, or donor, and in thus assigning a period to the work.

The charges on the shields may be thus described. On the top cover—

- (i.) A lion rampart.
- (ii.) A chevron between three mullets.
- (iii.) A cross, fleury.
- (iv.) A bend dexter.
- (v.) Three piles, impaling the same?

Some Member may perhaps assist in describing the charges with heraldic accuracy. No. v. is a difficulty in this way.

Nos. i. and ii., if I remember right, are to be found on the top, and are also reproduced on the body of the case and would thus seem to be the dominant arms, *i.e.*, possibly of the donor and his wife, the others being quarterings?

Unluckily, i. and ii., differenced as to tinctures, represent the arms of many families. They may, however, be seen together in the Poley shield in Hervey's Visitation of Suffolk of 1561; i. being the arms of Poley of Boxted, at the other side of Suffolk near Sudbury, the other placed in the third quarter of the shield. They are also to be seen in the Arms of Playters in the same visitation.

The family of Braham of Campsey Ashe, in the neighbourhood of Saxmundham, allied with the Revett family, bore a cross fleury; but the charge is not uncommon.

Both iv. and v., with the bend dexter, and the piles are very simple, and thus presumably very ancient coats.

I have been unable to find anything resembling them among the many coats excellently "tricked" in a beautiful ms. copy of Hervey's Visitation of Suffolk 1561, which has recently come into my possession. A quartering in the shield of Sir George Somersett of Badmondesfolde, Suffolk, comes near No. v., the tinctures being azure and argent. But without the tinctures as guides, one is only misled in the maze of heraldic "trickings" of the ms.

It must be left then to local heralds to puzzle out the local connection of the arms on the case. Enquiry as to the arms of the families in and about Sweffling, and of the priories, and ecclesiastics might perhaps help. And I much regret that my absence during the winter will preclude my joining in the enquiry.

Whilst writing on the subject of Suffolk arms, I may be permitted to add that, when discussing the subject of these coats with Mr. McDougall, M.A., the present squire of Sweffling, he mentioned that there were some arms on two windows of the house in which he resides. On looking at them, I immediately recognised the arms as those of my own family Revett, impaling, if I remember aright, in the one case Sicklemore, in the other Leake, both of Suffolk. On the glass door of the hall was a much more ambitious coat of twelve quarterings, a not very accurate copy of the hatchment of J. Revett of Brandeston Hall, which was preserved in Brandeston Church until some years back, and of which a drawing is in my possession. On enquiry, I ascertained that the house had once belonged to the Rev. Mr. Williams, who married a daughter of Revett of Brandeston Hall, who had probably placed the glass there. Possibly similar evidences of old days remain unnoticed in other parts of the County. If noted and reported by your Members, these might be of value to those of old Suffolk stock who, like myself, are interested in all connected with the history of their forebears.



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