

FUNERAL HATCHMENTS IN SUFFOLK

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Funeral hatchments, though of considerable heraldic and genealogical value, have, until recent times, been almost completely ignored. County histories and guidebooks normally omit them altogether, as do the majority of writers on ecclesiastical architecture and church furniture.¹ It was for this reason that, in March 1952, the Bath Heraldic Society started the ambitious scheme of trying to record in card index form the full details of every hatchment still surviving in Britain. The progress of the scheme has been most satisfactory. More than three thousand hatchments have already been recorded, and of this total over 300 are from Suffolk, a larger number than from any other county. Every English county is represented, but they are more numerous in the South-East and East. They are infrequent in Wales, though widely distributed; rare in Scotland; and now almost unknown in Ireland. Though normally found in churches, particularly those with a manor house nearby, they are frequently found in private houses (probably turned out of the churches at the time of restorations), museums and elsewhere. The Suffolk hatchments have been recorded with meticulous accuracy by Mr. H. Hawes and Mr. E. K. Stephenson, who must, during the past two and a half years, have visited almost every church in the county. All the information relating to Suffolk hatchments in this paper is the result of their researches. It seems certain that the Suffolk total will eventually only be exceeded by Kent, which has so far been much less thoroughly surveyed for hatchments.

The forerunners of the diamond hatchment, with which this article is concerned, are the achievements of medieval knights and nobles; the surcoat, crested helm, shield, sword, spurs and gauntlets, which were carried at the funeral and of which complete examples are rarities to-day. These degenerated, when armour became obsolete, into painted rectangular boards with the arms of the deceased and in the early 17th century evolved into the diamond shape, a style probably introduced from Holland.² These painted achievements must have been a familiar sight in the 18th and early

¹ A notable exception was the Revd. Edmund Farrer, F.S.A. whose *Church Heraldry of Norfolk*, 3 vols. (1887-1893) gives the full blazon of almost every hatchment then existing in that county. His *Church Heraldry of Suffolk*, compiled about 1900 (two manuscript volumes in Ipswich Public Library) does the same for Suffolk.

² For a discussion on early hatchments and panels, see Bayley and Steer, 'Painted Heraldic Panels', *Antiquaries Journal*, xxxv, pp. 68-87.

19th centuries, in both town and country, for it was the custom in those days for them to be hung up outside the house of the deceased during the period of mourning. They were in common use not only by the nobility (and occasionally royalty), but also by other armigerous families. The custom is not yet entirely obsolete, for in the summer of 1954, the hatchment of Sir Edwin King was to be seen hanging over the front door of his house in Finchley, where it was displayed in accordance with the terms of his will. Plate XXIV shows a hatchment hanging outside Great Oakley Hall, Northamptonshire after the death of Sir Arthur de Capell Brooke, Bt., in 1858. Although the photograph is not very clear, it gives a good idea of the method of displaying hatchments on houses.³

The earliest hatchment of diamond shape may be that in the possession of Mr. Elmhirst, of Ipswich. This is apparently unique in that it is painted on glass, but it is otherwise typical of an early 17th century hatchment; it probably came from Shropshire and is as early as 1626. Hatchments of the first half of the 17th century are exceedingly rare. There is one of 1629 at Eye, in Herefordshire and one of 1631 at Marnhull in Dorset. The earliest in Suffolk is that of Viscount Savage, who died in 1635, which hangs in the church at Long Melford.⁴ A careful investigation needs to be made of all early hatchments, as a number of apparently early ones on examination have turned out to be fakes, probably of 19th century date. It is evident that the local coach painter was sometimes employed to paint hatchments to complete a series or perhaps to replace those which had fallen into disrepair. In such instances, apart from other reasons, the style of decoration normally gives them away. Most early examples are small (about 2 ft. square) and on wood panels, though the Savage hatchment is an exception to the rule, being on canvas. In the 18th century the size increases to 3 ft. or 4 ft. at the close of the century, whilst some of the 19th century examples are at least 5 ft. square, even 6 ft. when there is a wide frame, giving an overall height of no less than eight and a half feet. Examples of early date are to be found at Kedington, Redgrave and Debenham. Early hatchments are generally well painted, and artistically satisfying; they frequently bear inscriptions, ranging from initials and a date, to several lines on a broad scroll in the base of the hatchment. Sometimes the frame itself is inscribed with the name of the deceased, as at Kedington and Long Melford, but in the majority of instances these have been added later.

³ This is reproduced from a plate which appeared in *Associated Architectural Societies Reports and Papers*, vol. xxx (1910), where there is, pp. 673-759, a useful discussion on hatchments and a survey of examples in Northamptonshire.

⁴ See a note on this hatchment elsewhere in these *Proceedings*, p. 214.

It is difficult to be certain when hatchments were most widely used, as so many of the earliest ones have obviously perished. Another considerable reduction in numbers must have taken place during church restoration in the last century, when it is certain that hundreds were destroyed. And we may be sure that on such occasions it would be the early hatchments that were removed, for those responsible for the work would hardly dare, however they felt, to treat in such a fashion the hatchments belonging to the family of the reigning squire.

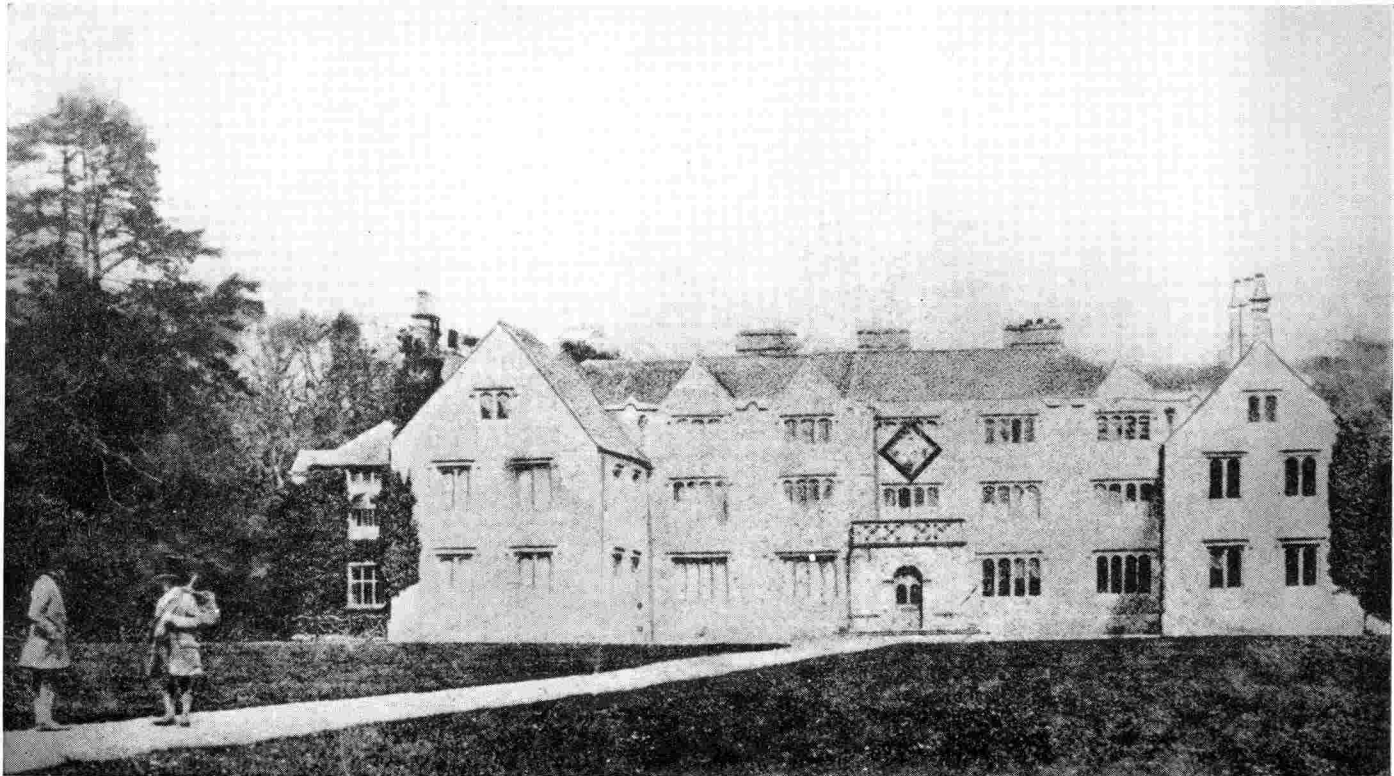
Surviving hatchments belong mostly to the period between 1750 and 1850, the peak year being 1837, and it is interesting to note that 3 survive for King William IV who died in that year. After 1850 numbers steadily diminish and 20th century hatchments are rare. The most recent Suffolk hatchments are those for George Rowland Holt Wilson (1929) at Redgrave, and Sir Thomas Warner, Bt. (1934) at Thorpe Morieux.

More than one hatchment for the same individual is by no means rare and is due of course to the deceased person having more than one family seat. The following persons with estates in Suffolk have two hatchments: Francis, 3rd Marquess of Hertford (Sudbourne, Suffolk; and Arrow, Warwickshire), Bertram, 4th Earl of Ashburnham (Barking, Suffolk; and Ashburnham, Sussex),⁵ Henry, 2nd Duke of Chandos (Thornham Magna, Suffolk; and Whitchurch, Middlesex), Sir William Fowle-Middleton, 2nd Bt. (Crowfield; and Barham, Suffolk), and William, 3rd Duke of Cleveland, (Santon Downham, Suffolk; and Raby Castle, Durham).

The marshalling of arms on hatchments deserves a special mention. For a man with one wife the position is simple, they are impaled in the normal way, or borne 'in pretence' if she is an heiress. For a man with two wives there are a number of alternatives, all of which were used. A frequent method is to impale both coats, divided 'per fess', as at Hadleigh, Eye, and Benacre; an equally usual method is for the husband's achievement only to appear in the centre of the hatchment, there being two small panels in the dexter and sinister corners each bearing a shield, the dexter impaling the first wife's arms, the sinister impaling the arms of the second wife; the extent of the black background behind the shields indicates whose hatchment it is. Examples can be seen at Brightwell and Hawstead. A third, not uncommon, method is for the hatchment to be 'tierced per pale', the husband's arms in the centre, impaling the first wife to the dexter and the second to the sinister. Less frequently the arms of both wives will be impaled 'per pale'

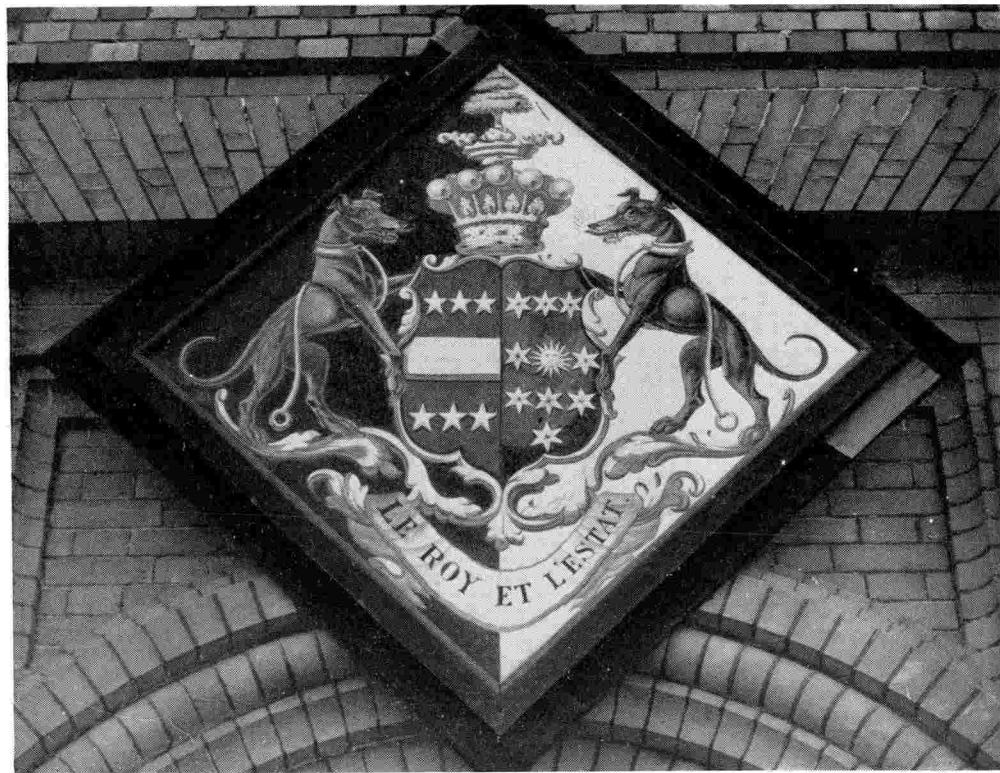
⁵ See plate xxvi, which shows one of these hatchments hanging over the door of Ashburnham Place in 1953, when it was used after the death of his granddaughter, Lady Catherine Ashburnham. (Photograph by *Hastings Observer*).

PLATE XXV



Great Oakley Hall, Northamptonshire, 1858.

PLATE XXVI



Ashburnham Place, Sussex, 1953.

to the sinister; and there is a hatchment at Cornhill, in Northumberland, where the coats of three wives are impaled, to dexter, sinister, and in base! The arms of bishops and members of orders of chivalry are marshalled differently, but no episcopal hatchments occur in Suffolk and none of the latter category have been noted in the county which depart from the normal practice. Perhaps the most complex hatchment in Britain is that for Sir Love Parry Jones-Parry, at Llanbedrog, in North Wales. Sir Love quarters 62 coats, impales two wives, bears 5 crests and 3 mottoes!

Decoration of a non-heraldic nature is the rule rather than the exception. Most common of all are cherubim, taking the place of the crest on the hatchment of a lady, but also not infrequently flanking the shield and in the base below the motto; in these latter positions they are found on male hatchments as well as female. Escallop shells and lovers knots often appear above the lozenge on spinsters' and widows' hatchments and the lozenges themselves are also generally decorated with gilt floriated scrollwork. Skulls, crossbones and hourglasses frequently decorate the frames of the earlier hatchments, many of the later ones being covered with black material, rosettes sometimes appearing at the corners. Winged skulls appear on the hatchments themselves, generally filling the bottom angle of the board or canvas.

A skull, when it takes the place of the crest is said to indicate the last of the line. Such hatchments are rare, though an example occurs at Kersey, to a lady of the Thorowgood family. Her arms are borne on a rococo lozenge surmounted by a skull, and surrounded by copious mantling. There is also a remarkable example at Moyses Hall Museum, Bury St. Edmunds. It is the hatchment of Merilina, daughter and co-heir of Thomas, Lord Jermyn, who married as her second husband Sir William Gage, 2nd Bt. of Hengrave. The arms, on a lozenge, are two coats 'per fess', Spring (for her first husband, Sir William Spring) and Gage, impaling Jermyn, and also with Jermyn 'in pretence'. The lozenge is surmounted by a skull, but in this instance Lady Gage's son by her first husband was still living, and her second husband's line was continued in the children of his first marriage.

In regard to mottoes, those of the family are often used, but more frequently some appropriate sentiment, such as *In Coelo Quies*, *Resurgam*, or *Mors Janua Vitae*, though sometimes both family and funeral motto are to be found.

Although the national survey of hatchments is as yet by no means completed and although there are still some forty Suffolk churches to be searched, it may be of interest to report progress up to the present (August 1955). Of the following lists, the first shows the present scores for the first dozen counties. The second is a list of the Suffolk churches which are at present known to contain

hatchments, showing the number in each church. Out of a total of about 515 churches in the county, there are examples in just over 100 of them.

Suffolk	311	Surrey	138
Kent	295	Warwickshire	126
Norfolk	198	Northamptonshire	125
Shropshire	179	Hampshire	122
Essex	172	Yorkshire	120
Wiltshire	143	Buckinghamshire	112

SUFFOLK HATCHMENTS

Aldeburgh	1	Eye	3
Ampton	2	Fornham All Saints	1
Ashfield, Great	5	Fornham St. Martin	3
Aspall	2	Framlingham	2
Bardwell	1	Gipping	1
Barham	5	Hacheston	1
Barking	1	Hadleigh	4
Barsham	4	Halesworth	3
Beccles	2	Hartest	1
Bedingfield	1	Haughley	5
Benacre	8	Haverhill	2
Benhall	1	Hawkedon	3
Boxted	7	Hawstead	5
Bramfield	4	Hemingstone	3
Bredfield	2	Hengrave	6
Brent Eleigh	2	Henley	3
Brightwell	4	Henstead	2
Bury St. Edmunds		Herringfleet	3
Moyses Hall ⁶	2	Hintlesham	2
Charsfield	2	Holbrook	1
Chelsworth	3	Hunston	3
Clare	2	Huntingfield	5
Coddenham	6	Ipswich—	
Cowlinge	1	St. Margaret	9
Crowfield	1	St. Mary Elms	4
Darsham	2	St. Peter	1
Debenham	2	St. Stephen	2
Denston	2	Christchurch Mansion ⁷	2
Easton	9	Kedington	10
Elmsett	1	Kelsale	2
Exning	1	Kersey	3

⁶ One of these (Spring) may have come from Lavenham.

⁷ These probably both came from Ipswich churches.

SUFFOLK HATCHMENTS—*continued.*

Kesgrave	2	Stonham Aspell	1
Layham	1	Stowlangtoft	3
Lindsey	1	Stowmarket	1
Long Melford	9	Stutton	1
Marlesford	1	Sudbourne	5
Martlesham	6	Tannington	1
Melton (Old Church)	2	Theberton	1
Mendlesham	1	Thorington	3
North Cove	1	Thornham Magna	7
Ousden	2	Thorpe Morieux	2
Pakenham	2	Thrandeston	2
Palgrave	1	Thurlow, Little	5
Parham	2	Trimley St. Martin	2
Polstead	5	Ufford	5
Poslingford	3	Wetherden	4
Redgrave	13	Wilby	1
Rushbrooke	1	Woodbridge	6
Santon Downham	1	Worlingham	1
Shelley	2	Wortham	2
Somersham	1	Wrentham	2
Sotterley	4	Yoxford	10
Southwold	1		
Stanningfield	3		
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			311
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