

THE CARVING IN FRONT OF THE SWAN INN, CLARE, AND WHEN IT WAS EXECUTED.

[READ JUNE 14TH, 1849.]

THE general appearance of this interesting piece of heraldic carving in wood will be familiar to the Members of this Institute, from the cut published in the last number of the Proceedings. It is not my purpose to make any comments on the paper which accompanied that cut, nor to go over the same ground more than I can avoid. These remarks may rather be considered as supplemental to what was there said, being for the most part an attempt to ascertain from intrinsic evidence the period at which this sign was executed. This paper was intended for the Clare meeting, but engagements of another kind prevented my completing it; and, finding that I have not been altogether anticipated, I am induced by the interest of the subject to return to it.

Assuming this carving to be original and genuine, which I see no reason to question, it is of earlier workmanship than the generality of observers would be likely to suppose. Having studied it for several years, I have long regarded it as remarkable for combining insignia of the Houses of York and Lancaster, including a coat of arms, which was discontinued in 1461 or shortly after. I hope to show that it is as early as the reign of Henry IV.; or if it be later, that there are sufficient grounds to justify an opinion that it was executed between 1430 and 1450. For some years, I cannot say how long, it was covered over with plaster; but it has been uncovered and used for a sign, as it now is, I believe, between 30 and 40 years; though I need hardly mention that the painting and gilding have been renewed more than once, and that minute details, which were originally in *colour* only, may have been lost.

The Swan, which is the principal subject of the composition, was a cognizance or badge of the noble family of Bohun, the male line of which terminated in 1372 by the decease of Humphry de Bohun, Earl of Hereford, &c. It occurs gorged with a crown, and chained as this is (though not to a tree, which is immaterial), on the seal of the elder

of his two daughters, Alianore, the widow of Thomas of Woodstock, Duke of Gloucester, and also on her monumental brass in Westminster Abbey.* Mary, the other daughter and co-heiress, was the first wife of Henry IV., the mother of Henry V., and grandmother of Henry VI. Thus gorged and chained it was one of the cognizances of Henry IV. and Henry V., and also probably of Henry VI., as it is found on the seal of Prince Edward his son. The crescent ensigned with a star between its horns was also a royal device. It is first met with as such on some of the great seals, the earliest example being, I believe, that of Richard I. before he went to the Holy Land. It is afterwards found on other seals, as those of the Cinque Ports and the like, on cockets, and on plate†. A crescent, star, and rose were on some plate of Henry IV.; and the servants of his household at Windsor are mentioned by one of the Chroniclers quoted by Holinshed, as wearing the badge of a crescent on their sleeves. These stars are with wavy rays: the suns of the Yorkists of later date have commonly, if not always, straight rays. This portion, therefore, of the carving was in all probability a compliment to one of the Sovereigns of the House of Lancaster.

The arms flanking the Swan on the dexter side are France and England quarterly with a label of 3 points‡. What was the original colour of the label, which is now *argent*, and whether it was charged in any way, cannot now be ascertained. The charges, if any, must have been minute, and were most likely not carved, but executed in colour only, and may therefore have wholly disappeared. These arms of France have only 3 fleurs de lis, and consequently the work

* The swan without the crown and chain appears above the arms on a seal of her grandfather, Humphry de Bohun, Earl of Hereford. That it was an old device in the family may be inferred from the place which a lost shield charged with it, once occupied on the brass referred to. It has been generally supposed to have come from the family of Mandeville.

† Much speculation might be offered on this combination of the crescent and star, and its emblematic meaning; for it was not exclusively a royal device. (See *Archæol. Journal*, vol. iii., p. 346, and vol. iv., p. 77.)

‡ In the cut of this shield in the last No. of the Proceedings, the label is of five points, and otherwise different in form from the original. It is evident that in making the drawings from which the cuts were taken, it was not considered necessary to give exact copies of the label and shields. To obviate objections by any one conversant with such matters, I would therefore mention that the forms of the label and shields, and the details of the carving generally, correspond with the date which I have assigned to the workmanship.

may be assumed to be subsequent to the accession of Henry IV.; for in his reign the fleurs de lis of France in the Plantagenet arms were first occasionally reduced to three, though on his great seal this does not appear. The like reduction had taken place in the royal arms of France about 20 years previously. It is commonly said that this reduction in the English coat was first made by Henry V.; and in one sense this statement may be true, for the earliest example, I believe, is on a seal of his when Prince of Wales, attached to a document dated in the 6th year of his father's reign; and from his own accession the change appears to be general. More will be said of these arms presently.

The arms flanking the Swan on the sinister side are Mortimer quartering De Burgh. The Lordship of Clare (among many others) and the arms of De Burgh, as well as the title to the crown, were brought into this family of Mortimer by the marriage of Edmund Mortimer, Earl of March, with Philippa, the only child and heiress of Lionel, Duke of Clarence, third son of Edward III. Her mother was the heiress of William De Burgh, Earl of Ulster. Their son, Roger Mortimer, Earl of March, succeeded his parents, and dying in 1398 transmitted the honours and rights derived from them to his son, Edmund Mortimer, then a child of 6 years of age; who dying without issue in 1425, they devolved on Richard, Duke of York, the son of his sister Anne Mortimer, the first wife of Richard, Earl of Cambridge, who was the second son of Edmund, Duke of York, fifth son of Edward III.; and upon the death of Richard, Duke of York, in 1460, they descended to his son Edward, Duke of York, afterwards Edward IV. By all these descendants of Philippa, daughter of Lionel, Duke of Clarence, were the arms of Mortimer and De Burgh borne; and thus it appears that we have a cognizance of the House of Lancaster, flanked on one side by armorial insignia of the House of York. The arms of Lionel, Duke of Clarence, were France (*semée*) and England quarterly, with a label of three points *argent*, each charged with a canton *gules*. These, as well as the arms of De Burgh, descended to the heirs of Philippa by Edmund Mortimer; yet it is remarkable that neither her son Roger, nor his son Edmund, appears to have borne the arms of her father Lionel, Duke of Clarence,

although they quartered her maternal coat of De Burgh. This omission of the paternal coat of Philippa is shown by the seals of her son and grandson, described by Sandford. Nor did that coat appear in the arms of Anne Mortimer, which formerly existed impaled with those of her husband Richard, Earl of Cambridge, in some windows mentioned by the same author. Indeed, according to the laws of heraldry, unless the royal arms in such a case form an exception, the right of the heirs of Philippa would seem to have been to quarter with their other coats the royal arms without any difference, if at all; as they represented the then senior branch of the family of Edward III. The title of Duke of Clarence was in 1412 revived by Henry IV. in the person of his second son Thomas, but with a difference in the arms, his label being of 3 points *ermine* having a canton *gules* on each, whilst that of the previous Duke of Clarence was *argent* with a similar canton on each point; thus seeming to recognise the continuance of the former coat of Clarence. This Thomas Duke of Clarence died in 1421 without issue; and among the estates of which he died seized, mentioned in the Calendar of the *Inquisitiones post mortem*, none of the Clare possessions appear: in fact they were then vested in Edmund Mortimer Earl of March, who died seized of them in 1425 as the same Calendar shows. The history of the period sufficiently accounts for this forbearance on the part of the descendants of Philippa after the accession of Henry IV; since, until the Duke of York asserted his right to the Crown about 1450, it could hardly have been considered politic, if it were safe, for the heirs of Lionel, Duke of Clarence, to add the royal arms to their paternal coat in any manner; but as Roger, the son of Philippa, died before Henry IV. acquired the Crown, his forbearance is not so easily accounted for. When Edward, Duke of York, became King *de facto* as Edward IV., in 1461, the coat of Mortimer and De Burgh quarterly, which appears on this carving, as well as all the honours of those families, merged in the Crown; though for some time Edward is found making use of this coat, ensigned with a crown and supported by two lions, on a seal for the Marches, of which an engraving is given by Sandford. Therefore this must be the latest period to which the execution of the carving

can be referred. § In the same year the title of Duke of Clarence, with the identical arms of Lionel, Duke of Clarence (except that France was not *semée*), was revived by Edward IV. in the person of his brother George; who was the Duke with that title who is said to have been put to death by immersion in a butt of Malmsey.

To return to the shield on the dexter side of the Swan, which the previous considerations will, I hope, assist us in identifying. If the label was originally as it now is, viz., *argent* without any charge, this is a coat of a Prince of Wales, or *princeps primogenitus* of a Sovereign; and if so, for reasons that will presently be stated, I think it can be no other than that of Prince Henry, afterwards Henry V., who bore this very coat. It appears (with 3 fleurs de lis only for France) on his seal before mentioned, which is given by Sandford, between two swans thus gorged and chained each holding in its beak an ostrich feather. Yet the sign in question was probably the cognizance of his father, as the arms are evidently subordinate to the Swan, and the feather seems used to distinguish his swan from his father's. But, it may be asked, what had Prince Henry to do with Clare, beside being the heir apparent to the King *de facto*, that his arms should there appear? To this there is a satisfactory answer. I have mentioned that Edmund Mortimer, son of Roger, was a child of 6 years of age at his father's death in 1398. Henry IV., soon after he became King, granted the rich wardship of the rightful heir to the Crown to his son, Prince Henry, who was only about 4 years older than his ward, judging, perhaps, that there was no one beside himself who had a greater interest in keeping young Mortimer out of the hands of those who might make a dangerous use of him, and in preventing his tenants from being arrayed against his usurped sovereignty. As guardian, the Prince had the custody of his person and management of his estates; and so was in effect for the time the Lord of Clare||. These could hardly be the arms

§ I think it unnecessary to proceed to shew the improbability of these being the arms of Edward IV., as Earl of March. In some coats borne by junior branches of the family, these arms continued for a while, but so differently marshalled

that they were easily distinguished from that above mentioned: as in the coat of Anne, Duchess of Exeter, the sister, and Cicely, Lady Wells, the daughter of Edward IV.

|| The office of the youthful guardian

of any other Prince of Wales; for, from the accession of Henry V. to 1453 there was not a Prince of Wales except for about 9 months; Henry VI. having been born only about that space of time before his father's death: and when his son was born in 1453 Richard Duke of York, the then Lord of Clare, was asserting his title to the Crown; and therefore no one of his tenants or himself would be likely to compliment his rival in this manner. I submit, therefore, that sufficient evidence has been adduced to warrant a belief that the arms on the dexter side were those of Henry V. when Prince of Wales, and that the carving in question was executed in the reign of Henry IV., viz., between 1399 and 1413.

But supposing, on the contrary, that these were not the arms of a Prince of Wales, and that the label originally bore some charge which has disappeared, let us inquire what coats of arms there were between the accession of Henry IV. and 1461, which consisted of France and England quarterly, with a label of 3 points charged in some manner, and belonged to persons at all connected with Clare; for in such case this coat was most likely to be one of them. There were three coats answering this description, viz.—

1. That of Lionel, Duke of Clarence, in which the label we have seen was *argent*, and each point charged with a Canton *gules*, and the descent of it has been noticed.
2. That of Thomas, Duke of Clarence, in which the label was *ermine*, and the three cantons *gules*.
3. That of the Dukes of York, in which the label was *argent*, and each point charged with three *torteaux*.

Enough, I think, has been said to shew that the arms in question were not those of Lionel, Duke of Clarence, as the issue of his daughter did not bear them; and it is not likely any one would have ventured to put up those arms, associated with the coat of Mortimer, in their own town of Clare. Thomas, Duke of Clarence, we have seen, had nothing to connect him with the place, except his title, and his being the son of the King; for the Lordship was then vested in the Earl of March, and it is very improbable their arms should have been thus placed there in juxta-position. Richard, Duke of York, who succeeded,

proved no sinecure. Twice was his ward stolen from his custody, and in the interval he had been taken prisoner by Owen

Glendower, and was not recovered till the battle of Shrewsbury.

as heir of his uncle, to the Lordship of Clare in 1425, when he was 14 years of age, soon after became a popular young nobleman; but he was not at first in full possession of the whole of the Mortimer estates in that neighbourhood, as the widow of his uncle, who was Anne, daughter of Edmund, Earl of Stafford, held a considerable portion of them for her dower till her death in 1433. From the time, however, of his coming of age, till about 1450, he appears to have been a loyal subject of Henry VI., and enjoyed the confidence and favor of his sovereign, and was much employed in honourable services both in France and Ireland; so that, in all probability, if the arms in question were not those of Henry V., when Prince of Wales, they were those of Richard, Duke of York, and the carving in question was executed during this period of harmony between the Houses of York and Lancaster. The Swan, to which the arms, as I have already noticed, are evidently subordinate, may have been in that case a cognizance of Henry VI., or the renewal of a previous sign which had been a compliment to his father or grandfather; while the arms on the sides were the paternal and maternal coats of the Duke, thus arranged to occupy those two spaces, in preference to marshalling them all on *one* shield, and placing them on each side; for the disposition of several coats was then left much more to the fancy of the artist than the modern practice of heraldry would allow. ¶

W. S. W.

¶ This carving, in all probability, formed the corbel of a projecting window, and the sign of some older hostelry, and has been preserved by being placed in its present situation, and protected from the weather by paint or other covering. The neighbouring inn, the Half Moon, may have derived its sign from the crescent mentioned in the preceding paper. Nor are these the only inns at Clare where traces of royal cognizances are found. In front of the Bear, apparently a timber-built house of some antiquity, the sign of which sounds like a reminiscence of the bear borne by the once powerful Earl of Warwick, of king-making celebrity, whose two daughters married brothers of Edward IV., are some carvings on a small scale, which appeared to me worthy of notice, though I was not able to satisfy myself as to their age. They are all below the overhanging part of the chamber. On a

bracket, which supports it, at the north end in what I think must have been meant for a falcon, having the head of a maiden, with flowing hair, one of the cognizances of the House of York; and on the uprights of the window are a falcon and a dragon, which, if the latter were *black*, were also cognizances of the same family; but if the dragon were *red*, it must be referred to Henry VII., and the figures may have been executed in his reign, when, by his marriage with Elizabeth of York, the two rival houses had become united; and this appears the more likely as a piece of ornamental carving, resembling the Tudor flower moulding, occurs on the above-mentioned bracket. There are some other subjects, which I think are a dragon of a different shape, and some lions, and a human head with flowing hair between two lions; but of these, if significant, I am not at present prepared to offer any explanation.