

# HERALDIC SHIELDS IN OLD WOLVERTON CHURCH, BUCKINGHAMSHIRE

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The connection between heraldry and churches is a strong one. Few churches fail to contain some examples of heraldic art, good or bad, which may have been done at the height of colourful medieval heraldry, or may be among the more tawdry examples of nineteenth or twentieth century carved marble miseries. Usually it is the family connection which brings in the heraldry. One thinks of the glories of the Howards at Arundel or Framlingham, or closer at hand, the intricate pedigree of the Hampdens on John Hampden's monument at Great Hampden church, or the Russells on their tombs at Chenies.

Here we are concerned with an unusual example of heraldry in a church, significant heraldry, but not showing one single family connection. These are the six shields at corbel level at the sides of the chancel arch in Old Wolverton Church, Holy Trinity. Many visitors and worshippers must have wondered idly to whom they owed these shields stuck up there for all to see. One might have expected them to be the arms of local families, but they are not, or not on the whole. They are in fact the arms of the Radcliffe Trustees at the time of rebuilding.

Holy Trinity was a medieval church in a very poor condition in the late 18th century, when the Revd Henry Quartley took charge, and it did not take him too long to persuade his masters that a new church was needed. He was not to know how timely it was, just before the expansion of Wolverton necessitated more church pews, and other churches. Holy Trinity was rebuilt, to the unusual neo-Norman designs of Henry Hakewill, between 1810 and 1815 (Pevsner 1994; Lipscomb 1831-47). It is a Regency church with only one surviving medieval monument, that of Sir Thomas Longville, from whose family the Wolverton estate was purchased

by John Radcliffe in 1713. The masters that Quartley persuaded were the Radcliffe Trustees. As is probably well-known, the Radcliffe Trust owned much land in this part of Buckinghamshire (Guest 1991), right until 1970 in fact, the new age of Milton Keynes. It was quite logical for the Trustees to be commemorated in a heraldic way, and six metal shields were prepared by the craftsman Richard Sutton at a cost of £4.10s. The account, of 5 June 1813, still exists in the Radcliffe papers in the Bodleian Library (Oxford University). A Royal Arms was also prepared, in this case by William B. Brown, at a cost of five guineas. This remains, with the arms of George III but is no longer on display in the church.

There follows a list of the Trustees commemorated, and their arms, in order from south to north. We have thought it worthwhile giving full details, as a printed record of the achievements as they appear. They have been examined closely and photographed in 1995.

- 1 Argent, a chevron between 3 estoiles sable; baronet's badge (Mordaunt)  
impaling, Quarterly 1 and 4, Vert six escallops argent, 3,2,1 (Holbech); 2 and 3, Ermine, a lion rampant gules, crowned or, in a bordure engrailed sable, bezanty (?Cornwall). (Fig.1)

Sir Charles MORDAUNT, 8th baronet. 1771-1823. Married in 1807 Marianne, daughter of William Holbech of Farnborough, Warks. (Burke 1826 etc). MP for Warwickshire 1804-20 (Thorne 1986). He was appointed Trustee in 1807. His father, Sir John, 7th baronet and grandfather, Sir Charles, 6th baronet, had also been Trustees (Guest 1991).

The Holbech arms (Burke 1884) are Quarterly 1 and 4, Vert, six escallops argent; 2 Sable, a bend engrailed between six billets argent; 3 *Argent*, a lion rampant gules, in a bordure engrailed sable, bezanty.

- 2 Ermine, a fess between three fireballs sable, fired proper (Cartwright) impaling, Azure, a chevron between three eagle's heads erased or (Aubrey). (Fig.2)

William Ralph CARTWRIGHT of Aynho Park, Northants. 1771–1847. Married first in 1794 Emma Maude, daughter of the first Lord Hawarden; secondly in 1810 Julia, daughter of Richard Aubrey, a Welsh lieutenant-colonel and Lord of the Manors of Chilton, Brill and Boarstall, whose arms are those impaled (Burke 1884). Cartwright was Trustee in 1813, a Tory MP for Northants (Thorne 1986), and the grandson of a former Trustee, William Cartwright, who was appointed in 1757 and died in 1768 (Guest 1991).

- 3 Per pale ermine and ermines, on a chevron between three fleurs de lis or, five lozenges counterchanged (Addington), on an inescutcheon, Quarterly 1 and 4, Azure, three demi-lions passant or (Hammond); 2 and 3, Gules a chevron ermine between three pheons, points downwards or (?Arnold). (Fig.3)

Henry ADDINGTON, first Viscount Sidmouth. 1757–1844. Married in 1781 Ursula Mary, daughter and co-heiress of Leonard Hammond of Cheam (she died 1811). He was Prime Minister in 1801, but resigned in 1804 (Thorne 1986), the year he was appointed Trustee. He was Chairman of the Trust from 1812–1828 (Guest 1991). The arms of Hammond of Cheam according to Burke's Armory (Burke 1884) are *Gules*, three demi-lions passant or.

- 4 *Argent*, on a chevron between three griffins passant sable, a crescent for difference (Finch) impaling, Quarterly 1 and 4, Barry of ten or and sable (Thynne); 2 and 3, Or a lion rampant, tail nowed, gules. (Fig.4)

Heneage FINCH, fourth Earl of Aylesford. 1751–1812. MP for Castle Rising 1772–4 and for Maidstone 1774–7, when he succeeded to the peer-

age (Namier and Brooke 1964). Married in 1781 Louisa, daughter of the first Marquess of Bath (Thynne) and Elizabeth, daughter of William Cavendish-Bentinck, second Duke of Portland (Burke 1826 etc). He was appointed Trustee in 1804 and was Chairman until his death (Guest 1991).

- 5 Azure, a fleur-de-lis argent (Digby) impaling, Azure, a fleur-de-lis or between in chief three crescents and in base three mullets, argent (Montolieu). (Fig.5)

Wriothesley DIGBY. 1749–1827. Son of Wriothesley Digby (Meriden Hall, Warks.) and Mary, daughter of John Cotes of Woodcote, Shropshire. Married in 1783 Charlotte Gabriella, daughter of Lieutenant-Colonel Lewis Charles Montolieu, Baron of St Hippolite (tombstone, Meriden Church). Digby was a lawyer who was appointed Trustee in 1799, a post he was to hold for twenty years. He had a house in Park Street, London, where many of the Trust's meetings were held (Guest 1991).

- 6 Sable, a helmet close between three pheons, each pointing to the centre, argent; baronet's badge (Dolben) impaling, *Argent*, three bars sable (Affleck) over all, on an inescutcheon, Sable, three lions passant gardant in pale argent (English). (Fig.6)

Sir William DOLBEN, third baronet, of Finedon, Northants. 1727–1814. Son of Sir John Dolben and Elizabeth Digby. Married, first in 1748 Judith, daughter and heiress of Somerset English of Eastergate, Sussex; secondly in 1789 Charlotte daughter of Gilbert Affleck of Dalham Hall, Suffolk (Burke 1826 etc). Sheriff of Northants 1760–1; MP for Northants and for Oxford University (Thorne 1986). Appointed Trustee in 1773, and continued until his death (Guest 1991).

It is unusual for the heraldry in a church to commemorate people not necessarily local. All these Trustees, and others of the time, were gentry and nobility, but their connection was more likely to be with Oxford University and Parliament than Buckinghamshire. John Radcliffe (c.1652–1714), founder of the Trust was a famous doctor, with royal

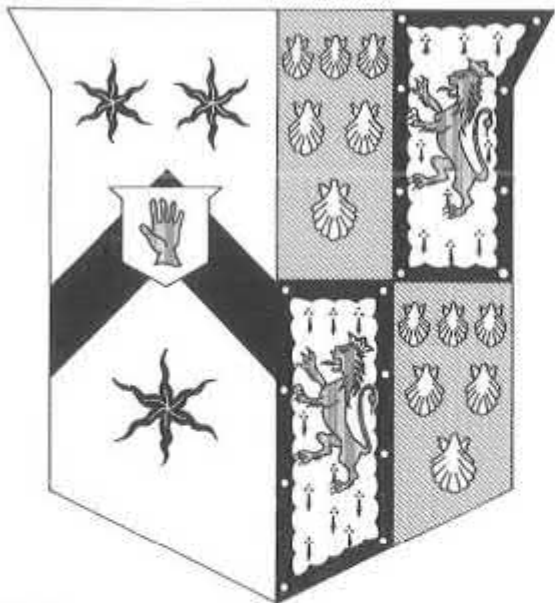


Fig. 1

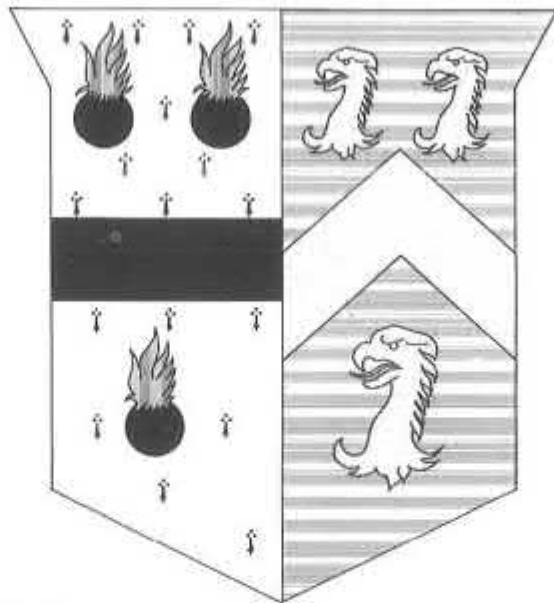


Fig. 2

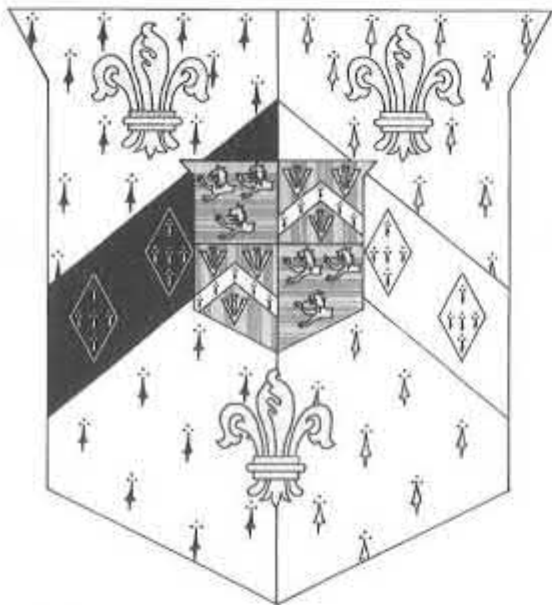


Fig. 3

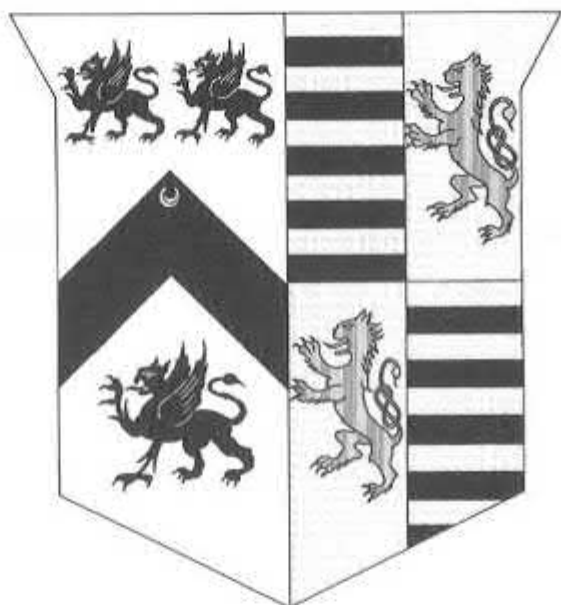


Fig. 4

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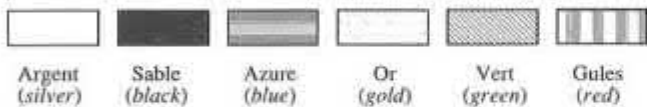




Fig. 5

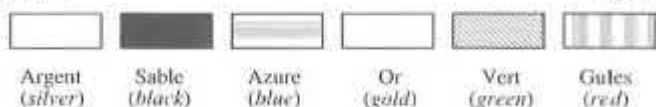


Fig. 6

clients, whose benefactions to Oxford include the Observatory, the Infirmary, the second quad of University College, and the Radcliffe Camera – James Gibbs' round library building. The Trust still exists, though its aims have changed somewhat since its foundation. Holy Trinity Church has been the recipient of a number of grants over the years, and as mentioned above, was rebuilt out of Trust funds.

To return to the Trustees, only Cartwright (who lived at Aynho Park) and Dolben (who lived at Finedon), can, with Northants seats, be said to be anything like local. One surprise of the commemoration is that John Radcliffe himself is not commemorated. His arms of Argent, a bend engrailed sable, are not shown in the church.

Although not of national importance, this connection between heraldry and the church fabric is unusual and of interest. The shields, some 180 years old, have been restored over the years, but it is important that a printed record should exist for future historians and conservators, one which shows the operation of a political oligarchy in the county.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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