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**Heraldry used on Roof Bosses in St George's Chapel –
Badges of York & Lancaster**

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Heraldry used on Roof Bosses in St George's Chapel – Badges of York & Lancaster

The *Illustrated Guide to the Heraldic Bosses in the Roof Vault of St George's Chapel, Windsor Castle* illustrates and identifies the bosses and has proved to be a very valuable tool in understanding the underlying scheme.

The vaulting was done in the reigns of:

- 1) Edward IV (d.1483), who had the chapel built and vaulted the east end of the north and south quire aisles.
- 2) Henry VII (d.1503), who had most of the rest of the vaulting of quire and nave done.
- 3) His son Henry VIII (d.1547) who had the crossing vaulted, mostly with the coats of the Knights of the Garter alive in 1528, together with that of the then prelate of the Order, Bishop Richard Fox.

Vaulting of the Quire Side Aisles done in the reign of Edward IV used Yorkist Badges

The North Quire Side Aisle

As noted in the guide, the east end of the north quire aisle has the earliest vaulting in the chapel located under the chantry chapel of Edward IV (d.1483) and is dated to ca.1480. This section probably needed to have a stone roof vault because of the king's chapel above it, resulting in the roof of the east end of the north quire aisle being lower than the rest of the aisle, vaulted later by Henry VII.

It has three bosses:

From the east

- 1) White Rose en soleil.
- 2) The royal coat supported by the Lions of March en soleil.
- 3) The royal coat with a background of clouds.

The White Rose en soleil combines two badges of Edward IV's father, Richard, Duke of York (ex.1460), the White Rose and the Sun in Splendour. The combined badge is found on the outside walls of the chapel whilst inside on the string moulding under the windows, roses, suns and crowns are carved separately. The White Rose is regarded as the most important of the Duke's badges.¹

¹ Pinches p107.

The White Lion of March is another badge of Richard, Duke of York, seen supporting the Royal coat and again en soleil. As can be seen from the Duke's seal when he was King's Lieutenant in France for Henry VI, he had other badges.



Seal of Richard, Duke of York, showing badges of the Plantagenet feather, the falcon, the white Lion of March, the fetterlock and branches of roses

Supporters of Edward IV used his collar which linked suns and roses with the white Lion of March hanging from it.²

According to Ashmole the houses of Petty Canons constructed at the west end of St George's Chapel were built for Edward IV in the form of a fetterlock.³

The South Quire Aisle

The guide also notes early vaulting in the extreme east end of the south quire aisle of ca.1480. Again, the roof is lower than the rest of the quire aisle, apparently to include a spy hole, so is structurally different to the rest of the quire aisle. It also has two recesses.

The extreme east end has:

- 1) Only one boss, the Cross Gneth, the most treasured of the chapel relics acquired by Edward I from the Welsh, with kneeling before it, Edward IV and Richard Beauchamp, Bishop of Salisbury, Chancellor of the Order of the Garter (d.1481),⁴ with a background of sun rays, the Yorkist badge, as in the three bosses at the east end of the north quire aisle.
- 2) The two recesses are decorated on their upper rim with the Yorkist badges of the sun and the rose.

Under the recess on the south wall, Bishop Richard Beauchamp evidently placed a memorial to the Beauchamp family. The bishop was a descendent of the cadet Beauchamps of Powick but the main line, the Beauchamps of Warwick, had died out in 1446 and another cadet line of Beauchamps of Holt in 1420.⁵ Their coats flank that of the bishop. In each of the three panels that form the memorial, the upper spandrels are decorated with the Yorkist badge of the rose en soleil and the Cross of St George en soleil, both with a garter, with the bishop's snail badge in the lower spandrels.

² Palliser & Loewy, p374.

³ Ibid, p372. It suggests the chapel had been completed by the end of Edward IV's reign with a wooden roof later vaulted in stone by Henry VII.

⁴ Beauchamp organised the building of the chapel for Edward IV. In the north recess, according to the inscription beneath it, he placed a sacred book and something similar, perhaps a book of obits for the Beauchamp family may have been placed in the south recess. The remains of metal fittings that probably protected the contents of each recess are still extant. It is thought that the Bishop regarded this corner of the new chapel as the most sacred part of the new building, enhanced by him translating here the body of Blessed John Schorn whose relics (including a boot?) were kept in a shrine in the south east chapel (Saul & Tatton Brown p73). This chapel is now the Lincoln Chantry.

⁵ Henry Beauchamp, Duke of Warwick died in 1446 and Sir John Beauchamp of Holt died in 1420.



Beauchamp Heraldry under the recess on the south wall of the south quire aisle (L to R: Beauchamp of Warwick; the coat of Bishop Richard Beauchamp, a descendent of the Beauchamps of Powick; Beauchamp of Holt)

The vaulting of the quire side aisles appears stylistically different from the rest, with almost all bosses having the sun badge as background, a feature continued when the rest of the quire side aisles were vaulted during the reign of Henry VII.

Vaulting done in the reign of Henry VII linked to the Lineage of Henry VII and his wife, Elizabeth of York

Henry VII (d.1509) arranged for most of the roof St George's Chapel to be vaulted in stone during the period 1498 to 1509.

Vaulting the Quire Aisles

As noted above, when Henry VII had the rest of the quire aisles vaulted, he retained the use of the sun badge as background, probably to fit in with the existing bosses but also perhaps in honour of his wife, Elizabeth of York, daughter of Edward IV. The use of the sun badge in this way makes these bosses stylistically different from the rest of the bosses put up by this king.

Henry VII made sure to include his royal coat, with its greyhound and red dragon supporters, on a boss next to the Cross Gmeth boss in the south quire aisle. This boss would have been of interest to Henry, who had a Welsh father, as it depicts the cross obtained from the Welsh by Edward I. The king showed this interest again by having a Cross Gmeth on the central boss at the beginning of the nave (severy 1).

The next boss to his in the south quire aisle is that for the king deposed by Edward IV, Henry VI (the royal coat supported by heraldic antelopes), whose mother was grandmother of Henry VII. Apart from Henry VII being a kinsman of Henry VI, the boss may have been located here as the latter's tomb was nearby, his remains having been brought to the chapel by Richard III to serve as an attraction for pilgrims.

Vaulting the Quire, Nave, Transepts and Chapels

The roof bosses put up by Henry VII include many badges associated with his lineage (especially the Red Rose of Lancaster & the portcullis from his mother, and the greyhound of Richmond and the red dragon of Wales from his father). The greyhound and dragon he used also as supporters to his royal coat. The White Rose for his wife Elizabeth of York occurs many times together with the Red Rose of her husband, as well as the combined Tudor Rose of red and white signifying the joining of the two houses. Branches containing red and white roses also occur.

In the nave there are also examples of joined badges for York and Lancaster, with a white lion (York) holding a banner with a red rose (Lancaster).⁶ The six bosses of white lions encircled with the garter in the quire, (severy 3-5, quire vaulted 1506-9), may well be for Richard, Duke of York KG, the grandfather of Elizabeth, wife of Henry VII, rather than as suggested his ancestor Roger Mortimer, a founder knight.

⁶ See boss 1 on south side of severy 6 & 7 (pages 73 & 79 of the guide). If the dragons on boss 1 on the north side of the same severys (pages 75 & 77) had been red rather than black, a comparable situation of a Lancastrian badge holding a banner with a Yorkist white rose would have been achieved. Could a mistake have been made when repainting?

The single ostrich feather also occurs many times – an interesting choice as it was a supporter of Richard Duke of York (see his seal above) and the grandfather of Henry VII, John Beaufort, 1st Duke of Somerset.⁷ It was a badge of Edward III and used by his descendants.⁸ It was certainly used by Edward IV together with the rose; see comments on the woodwork of the quire below. I think its use here is for Richard, Duke of York, the grandfather of Henry VII's wife, because a similar assemblage of badges to those on bosses in St Georges is found in Thaxted parish church in Essex, on roof bosses of the south aisle and these include a rose flanked by an ostrich feather and a fetterlock for York.⁹ The photo below shows the arrangement of the bosses with, further east, the portcullis flanked by pomegranates and then the Bouchier Knot flanked by Water Bougets (from the Bouchier coat), probably for Henry Bouchier, 2nd Earl of Essex KG 1499 (d.1540). He may have helped finance a new roof for the south aisle. The earl had Yorkist ancestry: his great aunt was Isabel, sister of the Duke of York and his aunt was Elizabeth Woodville, wife of Edward IV. The earl, however, was one of Henry VII's Privy Councillors, and also worked for Henry VIII. At St Georges, the Bouchier knot badge occurs on bosses in both the quire and nave, vaulted for Henry VII (see bosses guide p23 & 53) and Bouchier's coat occurs on the crossing, done for Henry VIII (p35).

More puzzling is the spotted panther badge, also common. The guide (p2) attributes this badge to Henry VI whilst later (p55), the Beaufort family is suggested. This confusion may have originated with Palliser & Loewy (p368) who attributed the badge to Henry VI while saying "it was a supporter of the present Duke of Beaufort." This duke was a descendent of Sir Charles Somerset, (d.1526), illegitimate son of Henry Beaufort, 3rd Duke of Somerset (ex.1464), whose tomb in St George's Chapel is located in the Beaufort Chantry Chapel in the nave. His grandfather, Edmund Beaufort, 2nd Duke of Somerset, was brother of Henry VII's grandfather, John Beaufort, 1st Duke of Somerset. Sir Charles Somerset was made a Garter Knight by Henry before April 1499. John Beaufort used a spotted yale as a supporter, as depicted on his stall plate.¹⁰ If the horns of the yale are removed, a similar animal to the spotted panther would be created. Could the latter badge be for Sir Charles Somerset? This seems more likely than Henry VI.¹¹ Further study may suggest more associations.

⁷ See his stall plate S13/6 in the *Illustrated Catalogue of the Stall Plates*. The stem of feathers in the stall plate appears striped, possibly reflecting the blue and white bordure on the royal coat of the Beauforts. The stems of the feather badge boss in the chapel however are painted gold with no striping.

⁸ Palliser & Loewy, p362, who describe the variations used by Edward's descendants.

⁹ This church has many links to Mortimers and Richard, Duke of York. His wife Cecily (sister of Richard Neville, Earl of Salisbury), in 1480 after the duke's death, obtained a licence for six of her Thaxted tenants to found a guild in the church (*Calendar of Patent Rolls 1476-1485* p227).

¹⁰ In the nave (severy 7, pp77 & 79 of guide) occurs the boss of a horned white hart and a white yale, collared and chained. It would be interesting to learn who is being represented here.

¹¹ The badge of Henry VI is more commonly the spotted heraldic antelope, also cited in Palliser & Loewy, that occurs in the great hall of Ockwells manor and in the window near to this king's tomb in St George's Chapel. The window was created by Queen Victoria's glazier, Thomas Willement, drawing on the Ockwells armorials.



Roof bosses in the south aisle of Thaxted Church. From the top (east): double rose flanked by foliage; Bourchier knot flanked by water bouquets; portcullis flanked by pomegranates; double rose flanked by fetterlock and ostrich feather; pomegranate impaling rose flanked by fleur de lis. Other bosses further west not illustrated.

A family tree showing the linkages is given below with a note of the badges associated with members of the house of York and of Lancaster. The many other coats of arms and badges are for donors such as Sir Reginald Bray (the hemp brake badge) and Westminster Abbey (the coat for Edward the Confessor). It is said that Bray found the crown in the hawthorn bush at Bosworth and gave it to Lord Stanley to place on Henry Tudor's head.¹² Bray's money paid for much of the vaulting and his coat and badge occurs frequently on the roof bosses of St Georges Chapel.

The woodwork of the quire, built by Bishop Richard Beauchamp during the reign of Edward IV, has only Yorkist badges. Most prominent are several desk fronts with the double rose crowned with ostrich feathers and a sun ray background (referred to as FS2, FS11, FN3, FN17 in the Guide¹³). In addition there is a misericord with the Lions of March on either side of a crowned rayed rose (LN12) and another with rayed rose supporters (LN17). More intriguing is the desk front showing two men carrying a pole with a tree between them with an ostrich feather hanging from it (FN2), a badge used by Richard, Duke of York, the king's father. The bishop, of course, made sure that his armorial coats occurred on the desk fronts (on FN5, FN12 & FS6) and his snail badge many times in both desk fronts and misericords.

Conclusion

Heraldic bosses help clarify the dating of different sections of the vaulting of St George's Chapel. The relatively small amount of vaulting installed during the reign of Edward IV used only Yorkist badges but in the later rule of Henry VII, when the latter vaulted St George's Chapel, the badges on the bosses, though primarily for Lancaster (such as the Red Rose), also included York badges (such as the White Rose, and I believe, the ostrich feather, for his wife, Elizabeth, both badges of her grandfather, Richard Duke of York). These badges, in addition to the Tudor Rose, symbolically brought the two houses together. Henry VII's son, Henry VIII, supported his royal coat in the centre of the crossing with the red dragon, replacing the greyhound with a crowned white-gold lion of England, but otherwise used no badges.

References

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¹² Palliser & Loewy p279-280.

¹³ See *Illustrated Guide to the Woodwork of the Quire*.

**Red Rose,
Portcullis,
Ostrich
Feather,
Yale
(spotted)**

**Red Dragon
of
Cadwalader/
Wales**

**Fleur de
Lis of
France**

**White Rose,
White Lion
of March,
Black
Dragon of
Ulster**

**Sun,
Falcon,
Fetterlock
Ostrich
Feather
(single &
panache)**

John Beaufort, Duke of Somerset KG c. 1440 (d.1444)

=

Margaret dau, of Sir John Beauchamp of Bletso

Owen Tudor

=

Katherine Valois, dau. of Charles VI, king of France, widow of Henry V, mother of Henry VI

Richard Duke of York KG 1433 (d.1460)

=

Cecily Neville, sister of Richard Neville, Earl of Salisbury

Margaret Beaufort

=

Edmund Tudor 1st Earl of Richmond

Katherine Woodville

=

Edward IV

**White
Greyhound
of
Richmond**

Henry Tudor (Henry VII) KG 1495 (d.1509)

=

Elizabeth of York

Arthur KG 1491 (d.1502)

1) =

Katherine of Aragon

Pomegranate

Henry VIII (d.1557)

2) =

Katherine of Aragon

Family Tree showing the ancestors of Henry VII and his wife Elizabeth of York and their respective badges, and the pomegranate badge of Katherine of Aragon, wife of both of their sons.