

The Heraldry of Ferrers.

By REV. H. LAWRENCE, M.A.

ANY account of the heraldry of Derbyshire families must naturally begin with the Arms of Ferrers, not only on account of their long tenure of the Earldom of Derby, and the important part played by them in the history of the County, but also because they held the Earldom at a vital period of heraldic history, and in consequence exercised an exceptional influence on the heraldry of Derbyshire in general. This is not the first time that the subject has engaged the attention of Antiquarian writers. At the meeting of the British Archæological Association in Derby in 1852, Mr. J. R. Planché read a paper on the subject which was subsequently printed in the Association's Journal.¹ The learned writer advances theories regarding the origin of these arms, with which I am unable to agree and the purpose of this paper is to set forward my own, and I believe the generally approved account of their origin. Mr. Planché maintains that as there is no early authority for the use of horse-shoes, they were only adopted later and are not really a Ferrers bearing at all. To return to the Ferrers Coats; three different arms have been in use at different periods and each provides an interesting subject of study. No one who has paid any attention to Derbyshire heraldry can have failed to notice the prevalence of shields showing either horse-shoes or vairé, and it is impossible to attribute the frequent appearance of these

¹ *Journ. Brit. Arch. Ass.* VII, 220. *The Armorial Bearings of the families of Ferrers and Peverell.*

charges to any other cause than the influence of the great feudal overlords of the house of Ferrres. The family evidently derived its surname, latinized into de Ferrariis, from a town in France called La Ferrière. There are several places of this name in the country, each of which was so called from the presence in the neighbourhood of iron-workings.¹ The one which apparently gave its name to our family was La Ferrière St. Hilaire in Normandy. The often repeated story that they derived their name—and incidentally their arms—from the fact that the founder of the family's fortunes held the office of Master of the Horse, or chief farrier to the Conqueror probably originated in an attempt to explain the adoption of horse-shoes as charges on the shield of Ferrers and had the additional merit in the minds of its inventors of offering a plausible derivation of the surname at the same time.² There is nothing unusual in the adoption of a badge or cognizance—afterwards to develop into a coat of arms—suggestive of the surname of the bearer, and it would probably be found, if they could be traced far enough, that a larger proportion of coats than is generally supposed owe their origin to this circumstance. As it is, many of our oldest and most powerful families bore arms which in some way suggested the surname.³ So that it is a mistake to imagine, as is often done that “armes parlantes” betoken a period of heraldic decadence. Another family of the name of Ferrers is credited with having used a “fer de moline,”⁴ but “fers de cheval” or horse-shoes

¹ *Journal* ix, 118. Also Mem. Soc. Ant. Norm. xix. 554.

² The use of the prefix *de* implies a derivation from a place-name. On the other hand the very similar names Ferrier and Farrer appear at first as *le ferrier* and *le farrer*, denoting an occupation.

³ Amongst many may be instanced Arundel (hirondelles), Corbet (corbies), Eggesfield (eagles) Fitzurse (ours) Lucy (lucis) Nevil (nef).

⁴ *Parl. Roll* (Suffolk, *Geneal.* xi, 241 “Sire Guy Ferre, de goules a vn fer de molin de argent e vn bastoun de azure.” This is evidently, however a maternal coat and he belonged paternally to the Derbyshire family. In the British Museum is a thirteenth century seal (*Cat. of Seals*: 384) showing a cross moline impaling vairé with a border of horseshoes, the arms of the fifth Earl.

must always be associated in our minds with the de Ferrers of Derbyshire. It is likely that they used a horse-shoe as a badge before the introduction of Coat-Armour and that the badge in due course developed into the charges of a regular coat. They are credited by Elizabethan heralds with a shield showing six, or sometimes three, sable horse-shoes on a silver shield.¹ There is no contemporary evidence for either of these coats, but there is indirect evidence that they did use horse-shoes, if not as a coat, at any rate as a badge, in the adoption of this charge as part of later bearings, as well as in the use of the same charge by many of their subfeudatories, amongst whom may be named Bakepuz, Curzon, Meynill, Montgomery and Edensor. If ever used as a coat, the horse-shoes must have been relinquished very early, in fact before either the number of the charges or their colour was fixed. The number of such small objects borne on a shield was usually indefinite at first and depended entirely upon the way in which they fitted the shield, and to arrange them in three or four diminishing rows suited admirably the shape of a long early thirteenth century shield, making the number ten or six. Later it was not unusual to reduce the number to three, as in the well known instance of the arms of France, a number which accorded better with the later equilateral type of shield. As regards the colours it is noteworthy that whenever no colour was known to them, the heralds of a later age invariably fell back upon black on silver. What evidence does exist would seem to point to a reversal of these tinctures and to show that the original bearing was silver (or gold) horseshoes on a sable field. This is the form in which they appear on the arms of the fifth Earl, and whether connected with the Derbyshire family or not, the

¹ "The bearing of horseshoes is very ancient as the arms of Robert de Ferrers, Earl Ferrars, testifyeth, who lived in the reign of King Stephen and bore for his arms argent six horseshoes sable." Gwillim, *Display of Heraldry*.

Ferrers of Bere-Ferrers used silver horse-shoes on a sable bend.¹

With reference to the Derbyshire families mentioned above as showing the Ferrers horseshoes in their arms, Mr. Pym Yeatman makes the startling assertion that the family of Bakepuz would never have ventured to adopt the horse-shoes unless they had been originally of the same family as Ferrers. There is of course no foundation for such an assumption. Almost every County has its distinctive charge. The cinquefoil of Leicester abounds in Leicestershire, the ermine of Bretagne in Richmondshire, the martlets of Furnival in Hallamshire, and the prevalence of these charges in particular districts can only be accounted for by supposing that those who used them adopted some modification of the bearings of their feudal overlords.²

The arms of Bakepuz, important subfeudatories of the de Ferrers of whom they held Alkmanton and Barton-Blount, were *gules two bars argent in chief three horse-shoes or*.³ To Curzon, whose fees under de Ferrers were Croxall and Kedleston, are assigned two horse-shoe coats: *Vairé or and gules on a chief sable three horse-shoes argent* ("Antiqua arma Curzon de Croxhall.")⁴ and *or on a bend azure three*

¹ "Monsire William de Ferrers port les armes de Mauley a trois fers de cheval en la bende d'argent." (*Nicholas*, Roll of Edw. iii). See also *Brit. Mus. Cat. of Seals*, 791. Martin de Ferrers, 1371. This entry seems to imply that the family was either related to or dependent upon the house of Mauley, but it is not really necessary to read into it anything more than the assertion that the arms of the two families were similar. If the shield were really a Mauley derivative, it would add one more to an interesting series in which we find the Mauley—or more properly speaking the Fossard coat,—or a bend sable differenced in six ways by the addition of three silver charges, wyverns, eagles, dolphins, crosslets, mullets (Hotham) and horse-shoes (Ferrers).

² Col. P. Saltmarshe in an excellent paper on *The Origin of Heraldry* (*East Riding Antiq. Soc.* xxiv, 7) points out that, though this fact was recognised by Camden, the land-tenure basis for the origin of early coat-armour has never been properly understood.

³ "Sire John de bakepuce, de goules a ij barres de argent en le chef iij fers de cheual de or." (*Parl. Roll, Geneal.* xii, 210 Northampton and Rutland).

⁴ *Journal*, xxxvi, 48.

horseshoes argent (Curzon of Breadsall).¹ The arms of Meynill are of considerable interest. The two great houses of the name in North Yorkshire and Derbyshire are supposed to be derived from a common stock. Even if that is so the branches must have separated before the days of Coat-Armour. The northern family used a coat which belongs to a series including Aske and other Richmondshire families; the Derbyshire Meynills bore *paly argent and gules on a bend sable three horse-shoes argent*,² betokening their dependence on de Ferrers. This original coat of the Meynills is now almost forgotten, since after marriage with the heiress of the important family of de la Warde, they always used the Arms of Warde, *vairé argent and sable*,³ so that the latter coat has come to be regarded as essentially the Meynill shield. A good deal might be written about the arms of Montgomery, but we are only here concerned with the earlier coat assigned to William de Montgomery in *Glover's Roll*: *Ermine a border gules charged with eight horseshoes or*.⁴ This coat was afterwards

¹ Do. p. 49. These arms seem to have been used by both Curzon and Dethick. The latter acquired half the manor of Breadsall by marriage with the heiress of the former. The Curzons acquired the property by marriage with the heiress of Dunne, whose arms these possibly are. Breadsall was also a Ferrers fee.

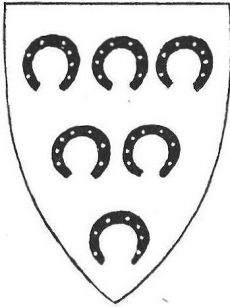
² See *Journal*, xxvi, 5b: The seal of William de Meynell in the Brit. Mus. (1277) has paly of six but the charges on the bend are indistinct. Nicholas, *Roll of Edw.* iij gives three variants of the coat. Monsire Hugh Menill, per pale de xij pieces argent e gules a une bend d'assure a trois fers de chevall d'or en la bend. Monsire Gilbert de Menill, pale de vj d' argent e gules a une bend sable a trois fers de chevall d' or en la bend. Monsire William de Menill, port pale de viij pieces argent et gules a une bend d'asur a trois fers de chevall d' or en la bend. Is it a coincidence merely that the arms of Grandmesnil were a pale? Or have we here the ultimate origin of the Meynell Arms—the pale changed into paly and then a bend of Ferrers added?

³ Apres li vi-je tout premier
Le vaillant Robert de la Warde
Ke ben sa banier rewarder
Vairie est de blanc e de noir.

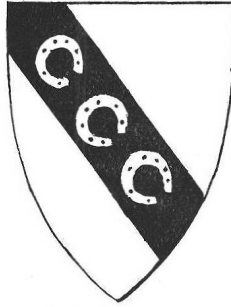
(*Roll of Caerlaverock*).

This knight was a considerable land-owner in Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire and fought in Flanders and Scotland, becoming steward of the King's household in 1306. He died in the following year.

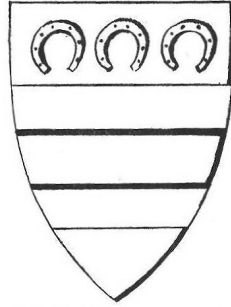
⁴ "d'ermyne a la bordure de goules et les fers en la bordure," a tricked shield shows that there were eight gold horseshoes (*Glovers' Roll*). The Navarre Armorial gives this identical Coat for les Sires Barons Ferrières.



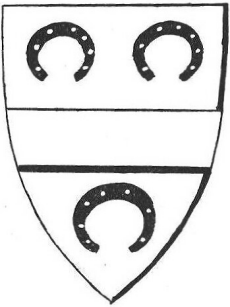
FERRERS.



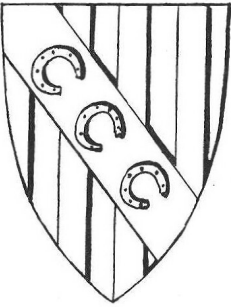
FERRERS OF
BERE-FERRERS.



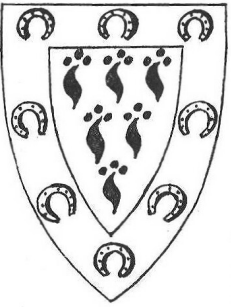
BAKEPUZ.



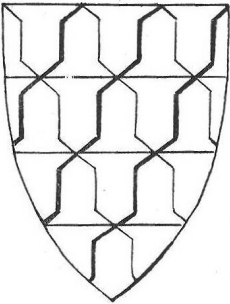
EDENSOR.



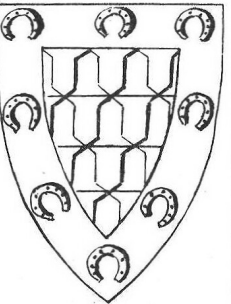
MEYNELL.



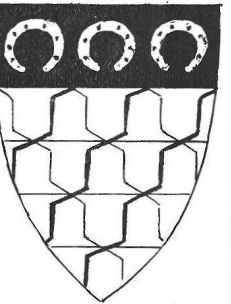
MONTGOMERY.



PEVERELL.



THE SEVENTH
EARL OF DERBY.



CURZON.

relinquished in favour of the better known one *or an eagle displayed azure*.¹ There can be no doubt about the first coat, the Testa de Nevil and the Red Book of the exchequer both expressly state that the Montgomeries held of de Ferrers at Cubley and Snelston. Probably they claimed a Breton descent, which would account for the ermine so that the whole coat is accounted for. There are three shields on the tower of Cubley Church² which are meant to represent this old Montgomery Shield, but the sculptor has allowed his imagination to run riot to such an extent that anybody might be excused for failing to recognise them. The Edensors—Edensor in Derbyshire was also a Ferrers manor—bore *argent a fess gules and three horseshoes sable*. (See Herald and Geneal. ii, 296.)

There is indirect evidence, therefore that the horseshoes were a recognised Ferrers badge, but they could not have been long in use³ as a strictly heraldic bearing before the Earls of Derby came to use an entirely different coat, and one which is even more definitely associated in our minds with that house. Most of the pedigrees assert that the fourth Earl married the daughter and heiress of William Peverell.⁴

It is evident that this very distinctive bearing *vairé or and gules* was recognised as belonging peculiarly to Peverell⁵ much in the same way that the horse-shoes belonged to

¹ *Boroughbridge Roll: Parl. Roll (Geneal. xiii, 62)* sire Willm de mongomeri de or a vn egle de azure.

² Cox, *Derb. Churches*, iii, 91: *Reliq.* xv, 7.

³ The question is often raised, "when did the great Barons first use Coat-armour?" Col. Saltmarshe, in the paper quoted above, mentions the seal of William Lucy, who was living in 1138 as showing the lucas of his family: the Clare arms date back to 1151, so that doubtless by 1150 most of the great Barons were using heraldic shields.

⁴ *Journal* ix, 118: Burke, *Extinct Peerage etc.*: see G.E.C. *Complete Peerage* for the contrary view; in the new edition Mr. Vicary Gibbs returns to the accepted view, and shows conclusively that the marriage did take place.

⁵ That *vairé* was regarded as essentially a bearing of the Peverells is shown by the later coats assigned to them. Powell's Roll of Edward III gives *quarterly 1 and 4 Vairé or and vert, 2 and 3 gules*: the same with the addition of a lion *rampant argent* is given as a quartering of Ferrers of Tamworth (*Harl. MS.*, 886).

Ferrers. Moreover the readiness with which the great feudal lords relinquished their paternal coats in favour of those of the heiresses whom they married, shows that these early coats were considered territorial rather than personal,¹ that is as being attached more particularly to the honour or lordship than to the holder and so being the common heritage of all who held under the tenant in chief. This bears out what has been said already as to the adoption by vassals of the Arms of their over-lord and a change in the *name* of the latter would not necessarily mean "a change of coat" on the part of his dependants. It is clear that the third Earl on succeeding to the greater part of Peverell's honour in Derbyshire emphasized the fact by using a shield which in people's minds represented that honour and I have very little doubt that this coat is another of those which were intended to describe the surname—*de pelli varia* or *de peau vari*. From this time onwards we have ample contemporary evidence of the use of this Coat, which continued to be the bearing of his lineal descendants the successive Earls of Derby and Lords Ferrers of Chartley and forms a prominent feature in the arms of many of their dependants.

The following examples will show how consistent was the subsequent use of this coat:—

- (1) *William 3rd Earl of Derby* (1162-1191) son of Robert the 2nd Earl and the heiress of Peverell. Seal (*Brit. Mus. Cat.*, 792).
- (2) *William 4th Earl* (1191-1246). Seal (*Brit. Mus. Cat.* 280): *Glover's Roll*.

¹ There is evidence of this in the way in which the Peverell arms were used by the fifth earl. The Peverell shield surrounded by a border of horse-shoes may just as well be described as a shield of Ferrers with Peverell on an excutcheon of pretence, marking the importance attached by him to the holding of that honour. The terms of the last Earl's deprivation shows that possession of the estates was considered the same thing as possession of the Earldom.

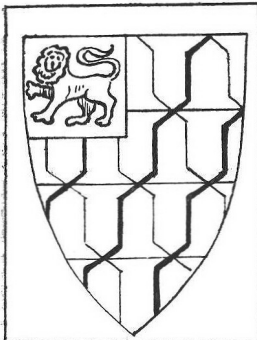
- (3) *William 5th Earl (1246-1254) Seal (Brit. Mus. Cat. 281)*:¹ *De Planchés Roll, (Geneal. iii).*
- (4) *Robert 6th (and last) Earl (1254-1278) Seal (Brit. Mus. Cat. 279)*:² *Roll of Edw. i (Archæol. xxxix, 400): St. George's Roll: See Journal xxxii, 93.*
- (5) *John 1st Lord Ferrers of Chartley (1299-1324) son and heir of the last Earl: Seal (Brit. Mus. Cat. 791): Nicholas, Roll of Edw. ii "le counte de Ferrers" though there was no Earl de facto in the reign of Edward ii: Parl. Roll (Geneal. xi, 109 and xii, 279) "Sire John Ferers Verrée de or e de goules."*³
- (6) *Robert 3rd Lord Ferrers of Chartley (1324-1350). Bore the same arms at the siege of Calais when he was knighted, 1348. Contemporary with him is an interesting Seal (Brit. Mus. Cat., 790) of Alianora de Ferariis of Stebbing, co. Essex, widow of Sir William Bagot (1326) with the arms vairé and a border of horse-shoes impaling a fess and eight billets (? Lovain).*
- (7) *John 4th Lord Ferrers of Chartley (1350-1367) Seal: (Brit. Mus. Cat.). His younger brother Robert married the heiress of Robert Lord Boteler of Wemm and was summoned to Parliament as Lord Ferrers of Wemm. The arms which he used were those of his father with a leopard passant in the sautreme point. (Jenyn's Ordinary).*

The fifth, sixth and seventh Lords of Chartley used the same arms as their predecessors. Two differenced coats

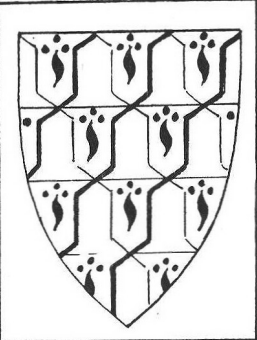
¹ On the reverse is a small counter-seal showing vairé within a border charged with eight horse-shoes. Mr. Planché lays great stress on the fact that his first wife was the co-heiress of William le Marschal, Earl of Pembroke, who is known to have used a horse-shoe as a badge. He points out that the horse-shoes were dropped by his son, who was by the second wife, and consequently had no right to use them.

² This fine seal shows the vair both on the knight's shield and the caparison of his horse: the reverse has a large shield of the same. A secretum of this Earl is illustrated p. 791.

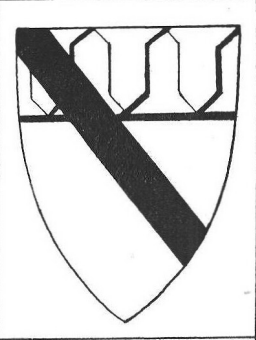
³ *Parl. Roll (Geneal. xii, 274) "Sire Thomas de Ferers (Herefordshire) verree de or e de goules a vn baston de azure." Sir Thomas Ferrers bore at the Dunstable tournament (1308) the Vairé Shield with a quarter of Bohum.*



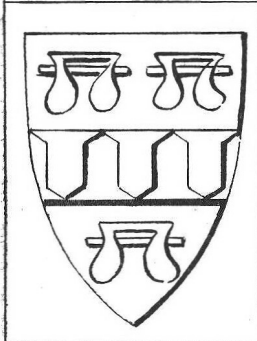
FERRERS OF WEM.



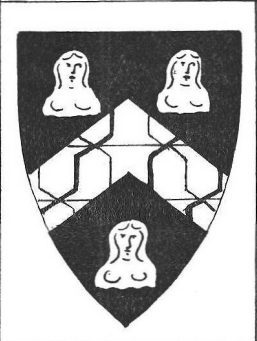
GRESLEY.



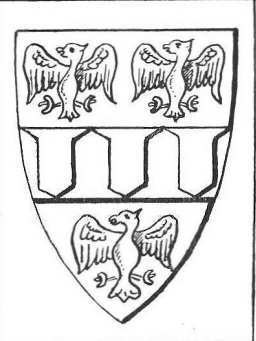
FITZ HERBERT.



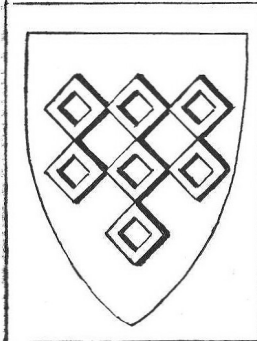
DETHICK.



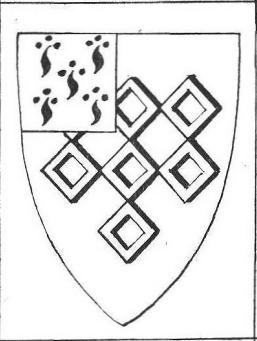
WOLLEY.



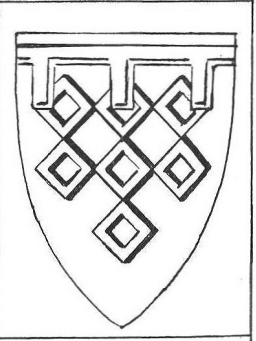
KINARDSLEY.



QUINCY.



FERRERS OF
BADDESLEY-CLINTON.



ST. ANDREW.

in addition to those which have been mentioned may we referred to:—

- (1) Hughe de Ferrers: “Vairé de argent and d’azur” (*Glover’s Roll*. *Nicolas Roll of Hen.* iii).
- (2) William de Ferrers: vairé or and gules a bordure azure: *Roll of Edw.* i (*Archæol.* xxxix, 400).

To these must be added by far the most interesting derived coat, as far as Derbyshire is concerned. Mr. J. Horace Round has shown that the Gresleys have held the manor from which they derive their surname from the period immediately after the Conquest.¹ The tenure named is by service of rendering a bow and quiver of twelve arrows annually. They continued to be numbered amongst the most important tenants of the Earls of Derby, and from a very early period used a modification of the arms we have been considering—*vairé gules and ermine*,² and this coat they have continued to use, unaltered to the present time.³

The arms of Gresley are not the only arms derived from the Peverell coat. Mention has already been made of the ancient coat of Curzon of Croxall. John de Bagpuse bore *azure cruissilly or with a fess vairé or and gules*.⁴ Other families showing the same indebtedness to the Ferrers for their arms, were Fitzherbert of Norbury, Dethick of Dethick, Kinnardsley of Brailesford and Wolley of Riber. It must not be taken for granted that all these families originally adopted their arms as vassals of the house of Ferrers but the use of the unusual charge by so many Derbyshire families shows that it was regarded as belong-

¹ *Origin of the Shirleys and Gresleys: Journal*, xxvii, 151.

² *Roll of Edw. i*: *Nicolas, Roll of Edw. ii* (verrie de goules e de ermyne): seal of William de Gresle, Lord of Lullington, co. Derb. (*Brit. Mus. Cat.* iii, 35), *Parl. Roll.* (*Geneal.* xi, 114).

³ The only exception is noted by Mr. F. Madan, in his *History of the Gresleys of Drakelow*: in Willement’s *Roll of Ric.* ii the arms are given as *Vairé Argent and gules*.

⁴ Charles’ *Roll of Hen.* iii.

ing essentially to the county. Fitzherbert of Norbury bore *argent a chief vairé or and gules and a bend sable over all*,¹ the family obtained Norbury, a Ferrers fee in Domesday, by grant from the Priory of Tutbury in 1125. The close connection with Ferrers is obvious. The Dethicks originally of Dethick bore *argent a fesse vairé or and gules and three water-bougets azure*.² The Kinnardsleys of Brailesford, *Argent a fesse vairé or and gules and three eagles displayed gules*. The Wolleys of Riber *sable a chevron vairé or and gules and three maiden's heads*.³

By his marriage with Margaret one of the co-heiresses of Roger de Quinci, Earl of Winchester, the seventh Earl of Derby had two sons. The elder became the last Earl and ancestor of the Lords of Chartley and Wemm, both of which families continued to use the Peverell coat. The younger, Sir William, inherited his mother's manor of Groby in Leicestershire and dying in 1287 was succeeded by his son, also called William, who was summoned to Parliament in 1297 as Lord Ferrers of Groby. He and his successors in the barony made use of the de Quinci arms, *gules seven mascles or*, a coat associated with the Earldom of Winchester much in the same way that the horse-shoes and the vairé coat were as we have seen, with the Earldom of Derby.⁴

William 1st Lord Ferrers of Groby (1297-1325), Seal (*Brit. Mus. Cat.*, 792): *Nicolas, Roll of Edw. ii.*:⁵ *Par. Roll*: Barons' letter to the Pope (seal): Siege of Caerlaverock etc.⁶

¹ Vis. 1611 and 1662.

² *Jenyns' Ordinary*.

³ Vis. 1662, *Journal*, xiii, 30.

⁴ Thus when in 1472 King Edward IV advanced Lewis de Bruges to the Earldom of Winchester, the latter had a grant of Arms frankly reminiscent of the old Quinci coat d'asur a dix Mascles dor enorme dung canton de nostre propre armes Dangleterre cestassavoir de goulez a ung lipard passaunt dor armee dasur.

⁵ Sire William de Ferreres a les losenges de or

⁶ Guillemes de Ferreres bel
E noblement i fu remis,
De armes vermeilles ben armes,
O mascles de or del champ voidies.

Henry 2nd Lord (1325-1343) Seal: (*Brit. Mus. Cat.*, 280) *Nicolas Roll of Edw.* iii.¹

William 3rd Lord (1343-1371) Seal (*Brit. Mus. Cat.*). Perhaps Ralph Ferrers who differenced the arms with a silver label at the siege of Calais was his brother.²

Henry 4th Lord (1371-1387) Jenyn's Ordinary.

William 5th Lord (1387-1444) Siege of Rouen.

The last Lord Ferrers of Groby of this family had two sons, the elder Henry had a daughter whose husband, Sir Edward Grey was summoned to Parliament as Lord Ferrers of Groby, the younger son Thomas was ancestor of the Ferrers of Tamworth and Baddesley-Clinton, the former differencing their arms with a *label azure*, the latter with a *canton ermine*.

Probably the only Ferrers Heraldry surviving in Derbyshire is on the tower of the Church at Walton-on-Trent.³ There are three shields two of them showing the de Quinci mascles, the first certainly with a label of three points, the third has Wastneys quartering Gresley.⁴ The manor seems to have been granted to Henry Lord Ferrers of Groby in 1337.⁵ Ferrers of Walton recorded their pedigree at the Visitation of 1662.⁶

There is one coat which is definitely derived from the Quinci one. The family of St. Andrew of Gotham seem

¹ Monsire Henry de Ferrers port de gules a vj lozenges perces d'or.

² Sir William knighted at the Capitulation of Calais, 1348, differenced with a baston azure. Another Sir Ralph bore on the Authority of Powell's Roll, the arms with the addition of a *border engrailed argent*.

³ There is some late Ferrers heraldry in Tamworth Castle.

⁴ A mistake for Gresley quartering Wastneys (*Journal*, xxxv, 29).

⁵ *Close Roll 2 Edw.* ii. Lysons v, 281.

⁶ *Journal*, xlii, 24. Sir John Ferrers of Tamworth who died in 1680. His ancestors had acquired Tamworth by marriage with the heiress of Neville representative of Marmion,

". . . Lord of Fontenaye,
of Lutterward and Scrivelbaye,
of Tamworth tower and town."

An MS. in the possession of the Society gives for his arms: quarterly (1) Peverell (for Ferrers), (2) Freville (3) Marmion (4) Quinci—with Puckering on an escutcheon of pretence.

to have originally borne three mascles only but later to have used five differenced, as in the case of Ferrers of Tamworth with a label.¹ Roger de Quinci whose daughter married the Earl of Derby had a Scottish connection in that his wife was the daughter and co-heir of Alan Lord of Galloway. In her right he became Constable of Scotland, so that it is reasonable to suppose that a junior member of his family as a feudal dependant took his surname from the town of St. Andrew's.

¹ *Parl. Roll (Geneal. xii, 269)* Sire Rogr de Saint Andrew, de goules a iij losenges de or e vn label de azure. In Powell's Roll of Edw. iii, Sir John St. Andrew bore seven mascles and a label of three points argent.