

This is an Open Access document downloaded from ORCA, Cardiff University's institutional repository: <https://orca.cardiff.ac.uk/id/eprint/159866/>

This is the author's version of a work that was submitted to / accepted for publication.

Citation for final published version:

Lindfield, Peter and Foyle, Jonathan 2021. A forger's folly?: George Shaw's productions for Chetham's Library, Manchester. *The British Art Journal* 21 (3) , pp. 42-50.

Publishers page:

Please note:

Changes made as a result of publishing processes such as copy-editing, formatting and page numbers may not be reflected in this version. For the definitive version of this publication, please refer to the published source. You are advised to consult the publisher's version if you wish to cite this paper.

This version is being made available in accordance with publisher policies. See <http://orca.cf.ac.uk/policies.html> for usage policies. Copyright and moral rights for publications made available in ORCA are retained by the copyright holders.



A forger's folly?*

The productions of George Shaw (1810–76) for Chetham's Library, Manchester

Jonathan Foyle and Peter N Lindfield



George Shaw (1810–76), architect, designer of applied arts, and collector of antiquities, is hardly known, especially when comparing his reputation with those of his nationally influential contemporaries working in the Gothic style, such as George Gilbert Scott (1811–78), A.W.N. Pugin (1812–52), and, indeed, the unrelated Henry Shaw (1800–73). George Shaw is nevertheless an intriguing figure in late Georgian and Victorian antiquarian material culture, and he and his work deserve far more recognition. His work at St Chad's, Rochdale, and the Radcliffe bed, now on loan to Ordsall Hall, Salford, have been the subject of recent essays by Adam Bowett.¹ While shedding light on some of Shaw's work, Bowett nevertheless does not offer a complete explanation of Shaw's antiquarian output. The following account demonstrates how Shaw produced pseudo-medieval, yet almost entirely modern furniture for Chetham's Library, Manchester, and it records the influences guiding their forms and details. This essay also demonstrates the significance that the library's ill-understood collection of ancient furniture had to Shaw's practice, and the role that salvaged carving played in the creation of such faked ancient furniture, in particular some unique examples of early carved heraldic ornament

that, in turn, offer rich insights into the mutability of late medieval royal heraldry.

Shaw was active mainly around the home he romantically styled as 'St Chad's' on High Street, Uppermill, Saddleworth, 12 miles east-north-east of Manchester. By the early 1840s he had experienced the decline of his family's mill business whereupon he chose to make a living by drawing on his antiquarian interests to design and furnish local churches and houses in the Gothic taste.² During this decade he was also notably engaged as a forger: his workshop manufactured bespoke furniture purporting to date to late Plantagenet, Tudor, and Elizabethan England, and bearing the heraldic devices of his victims' ancestors.³ One of the most significant influences upon this fake ancestral furniture – dark-stained pieces⁴ he presented as confidentially acquired antiquities – is the marriage bed made in 1485–86 for Henry VII and Elizabeth of York (the 'Henry VII bed'), now in the Langley Collection at Humshaugh, Northumberland (Pl 1).⁵

This tester bed with heraldic crestings conformed to the inherited proportions of the posts and mural of the c1270 state bed enclosure in the Painted Chamber of Westminster Palace, London, where the 1486 royal marriage took place after 'a marriage bed and other suitable decorations were prepared', almost certainly representing the last example to fit this long-inherited context before the removal of the post-and-drape enclosure in favour of larger royal beds with integral canopy rails for drapes.⁶ There are records giving details of a bed – potentially this one – among 'things received at the great wardrobe during the term covered by Alvered Cornburgh's account' (1486–87), including 'i chair of state; i great bed';⁷ and also records of those needing repair

The illustrations are of work by George Shaw (1810–1876) unless otherwise indicated

1 The Henry VII Marriage Bed, 1485–86, with later additions and restorations. Courtesy of Ian Coulson, The Langley Collection

2 The Arms of Henry VII, applied to the interior of Shaw's house, St Chad's, Uppermill. Photograph: Jonathan Foyle

3 The Arms of James I, applied to the interior of Shaw's house, St Chad's, Uppermill. Photograph: Jonathan Foyle

such as payments in 1487 'to John Birth, "joynour", for the mending of the woodwork of one great bed of state, vi s. viii d. and for paste...iiii d'.⁸ Evidence of some of the original paint materials was provided at the 2019 conference at the V&A, 'The Bed of Roses', such as fragmentary layers of paint colour (including natural ultramarine derived from *lapis lazuli* painted over a base of coal that had been largely stripped back and overpainted with thick brown varnish in the Victorian period);⁹ such layers of history, modification, and use of historic materials would have been outside the remit of a Victorian forger.

Shaw never understood the identity of this exceptional survival. He first encountered it in 1842 at the direction of his friend and correspondent, James Dearden of Rochdale Manor. The Deardens had been collectors of, among other things, ancient furniture, and writing on 3 October 1829 Shaw records that '– the Deardens showed him [their mutual friend, the antiquarian Frederick Raines (1805–78), curate of Saddleworth Church] a very capital collection of Antiquities and curiosities of every kind, and amongst other things, the state bed from Latham [*sic*] House which was there during the siege [of 1644]'. He referred not to the royal bed, but a second example of c1500 identifiable as from Lathom by its carved heraldry belonging to Thomas Stanley. It was rediscovered in the 1970s and exported to the United States of America.¹⁰ In its form, dimensions of 6'6" length x 5'6" width, and many carved details, its makers in around 1500 had followed the example of the royal bed save for a reduction in length (from 6'9").

In 1842 Dearden suggested that Shaw should visit a house near Huddersfield – the house itself is not identified in any correspondence – to view an old bed, and in a letter from 5 October Shaw describes that piece as a 'Fine old and much dilapidated bed, near Huddersfield and which he [Dearden] wishes me to get repaired for him. – I have seen it and believe it will be one of the first and first ones after its reparation, with addition of heraldic insignia &c. &c. &c.'¹¹ Dearden went cold on its acquisition, telling Raines on 11 October 1842 that 'the bed I have not yet bought and perhaps now shall not'.¹² Instead, George Shaw bought it, for the 'added heraldic insignia', representing both its royal occupants – actual and intended – remains in Shaw's house (Pl 2, Pl 3). These arms, with James I-era obelisks, are of English Stuart use. The achievement, with a later-replaced shield, notably re-using the headboard's gothic banderole lettering, is the most significant pre-Shaw intervention. Shaw truncated and varnished the original 15th-century front canopy cresting centred upon the arms of England, for use as an ornamental pediment over the door in his study at 'St Chad's'. He also acquired with the bed an early 18th-century royal achievement depicting the arms of James I later made for the headboard (the fixing holes on the reverse of the headboard and the achievement line up), and the added Stuart imagery corresponds with the century's Jacobite risings. This achievement is still used, along with Jacobean oak terms, as an overmantel in what was his sitting room at St Chad's in Uppermill.¹³

Clearly, contrary to Bowett's suggestion, Shaw did not make this royal bed:¹⁴ he did not understand its ultimate origin, let alone its raft of iconographic subtleties and redundant additions. Shaw did not identify it, research its provenance, or offer it for sale as an exceptional object. In short, he had no grasp of its true age and importance. Instead, Shaw stripped, varnished, and partly dismantled it, the latter exemplified by the bed's heraldic achievements remaining as decorative elements in his Saddleworth home, including the James I shield mentioned above, and the Royal arms as a door overmantel, bearing the three fleur-de-lys of France (quarters 1 and 4) quartered with the three lions passant guardant of England adopted first by Henry IV (quarters 2 and 3). Shaw loosely and liberally copied the bed. His derivative work was recognised by Victor Chinnery who wrote to Ian Coulson to explain that he had examined 'the so-called "Paradise Bed" [the example made for the Duke of Northumberland, considered below] which must surely have been copied from your bed'.¹⁵ In 2014 it was found that the bed-posts of the original model closely match a group of salvaged late medieval wainscot posts made by the same workshop from the same supply of oak with 'hR' on the knops.¹⁶ Dendrochronology has shown these are coeval with the bed, and that both are made from undateable European oak with fine, tight, rings typical of a cold climate. The DNA origin of this oak is centred between Bohemia and Latvia, which fits late-medieval royal custom: oak boards from Riga are recorded for a bed made for Edward III.¹⁷

George Shaw's forgeries

Shaw's burgeoning interest in heraldry and his excitement over the ancient bed were focused on the latter's value as a rich exemplar of ornament, decoration, and structure. The various decorative motifs included on the bed's structure, such as incised diamonds on the posts, as well as strings of engrailed trefoil-leaves, Gothic tracery, and sinuous scrollwork, together with the placement of un-quartered heraldic shields, inform his forged ancestral furniture made for the Duke of Northumberland, the Earl of Bradford, and probably also the Earl of Derby. To the latter he appealed in 1842 that 'I have been given to understand you are anxious to get to Knowsley all the supposed relics of the pillaged and dismantled house of Lathom' – just before Derby emptied his pockets for antiquities at the Strawberry Hill sale that April.¹⁸ Shaw's earliest recorded interest in the subject is charted in his teenage diaries, when on Sunday 14 March 1829 he spent the evening with Francis Raines, the then new curate of Saddleworth Church, and 'our conversation lay principally upon heraldry'.¹⁹ Progress was swift, and on 23 September 1829 Shaw records:

Studying heraldry in the evening, which I begin to understand very well now. I can decipher coats of arms very well, except they be very intricate, and obscure, but I am not as yet, able to blazon the different quarterings of a family in their proper order.²⁰

The synergy between his antiquarian interests and studying heraldry came in useful, especially helping him date the royal bed: the Royal arms of England were included as separate shields in the bed's footboard and headboard, and combined in a quartered shield on the tester's original crest (Pl 2). The arms are *quarterly, 1st and 4th France moderne* (three fleur-de-lys), *2nd and 3rd England*: these arms were introduced by Henry IV and used by Henry V, Richard III, Edward IV, Henry VII, Henry VIII, and Elizabeth I. But without supporters, Shaw could not determine which monarch the arms belonged to, and hence the reign that the bed dated to. What these arms told him, however, was that the bed was produced sometime



4 The Paradise Bed for the Duke of Northumberland, 1847.
Courtesy of Christie's

5 Detail of the Henry VII Marriage Bed's Headboard, 1485–86, with later additions and restorations. Courtesy of Ian Coulson, The Langley Collection

6 Detail of the Cresting from a mirror for the Duke of Northumberland, 1847.
Courtesy of English Heritage

7 Interior of St Chad's Church, Rochdale, from 1747.
Photograph: Peter N Lindfield

8 One of a suite of chairs for Chetham's Library, c1850.
Photograph: Peter N Lindfield



towards the end of the Plantagenets, or in the Tudor period. This finely carved 15th-century royal marriage bed had an important impact upon Shaw's output in a number of ways. First, he reproduced it on a smaller scale, each time amending the royal arms on the headboard and footboard to those representing ancestors of the client in question. Probably the earliest example was one now in private ownership in Essex, sold by Sotheby's in 2005.²¹ Its 4'9" wide frame retains some of the more complex details of the original, of a kind that were subsequently edited out of future versions as being too expensive.²² This example features royal arms and 'H' 'R' on the headboard and posts, and a rose and Beaufort portcullis on the footboard.

In a letter from 24 September 1847 he described to Algernon Percy (1792–1865), 4th Duke of Northumberland, the rich character of another 'Paradise bed' that he had made as an illiterate and smaller version of the royal 15th-century example (Pl 4). He did not understand or replicate the

Christological language of the original royal marriage bed, but simply emphasised that 'each panel [is] of pierced and perforate carving, as fine as the best Cathedral screen work'.²³ He sold it to the Duke as a genuine family relic for £80.²⁴ Despite his cavalier confidence, Shaw's expertise was manifestly lacking. Between 1537 and 1560 the painted text on the original headboard banderole (presumably describing the scene, the mystical union of Christ and the Virgin heralding the return to Paradise and eternal life) was replaced by a permanently incised Protestant statement according to the then current text of the Matthew's Bible/Edwardian Prayer Book (1537–60): 'The Sting of death is Sinne; the Strength of Sinne is the Lawe' (Corinthians I 15:56) (Pl 5). This would have been too harsh for Shaw's Victorian clients, and so he applied paraphrased texts from Genesis 3:6 about eating apples – without understanding that the royal bed's Adam and Eve really represented Christ as the 'New Adam' and Mary as the 'New Eve', the saviours of Paradise rather than its agents of loss. Clumsier still, Shaw's first examples purporting to have belonged to the Duke of Northumberland's ancestors were carved with the lion rampant for Brabant and Lovaine (*Or a Lion rampant Azure*) and a line of three abutted diamonds for Percy (ancient), which should have been five (*Azure five Fusils conjoined in fess Or*) (Pl 6). This anomaly was pointed out by the Duke in a letter, which led Shaw to correct the remainder of his 'discoveries'.

These pieces can be seen in the largest collection of Shaw's forged furniture, now under the care of English Heritage, in the Duke's Room, Warkworth Castle, Northumberland. The Duke paid £230 on 2 November 1847, and then £326 for 'certain articles of ancient furniture' on 31 December 1847, and finally £120 on 3 September 1850. The Duke of Northumberland's bed was lent the veil of antiquity through Shaw's trademark sooty varnish, which earned it a place in the Prudhoe Tower at Alnwick, though he did not believe Shaw's claims: the number of 'discoveries' Shaw offered him, the Duke wryly noted, 'might raise a suspicion that the supply was expedited from a store of unlimited quantity'.²⁵ Flush with his success, Shaw wrote to the Earl of Bradford at Weston Park, Shropshire on 5 September 1848 to offer a clock, cupboard and 'ditto, or cabinet', as well as a version of the Henry VII bed, while again missing its point entirely:

There is a most magnificent State Bed Stead with Adam & Eve in Paradise etc. etc. in the head part, with the Arms of Bridgeman occurring again and again in various parts in various shields amongst conventional foliage.

Shaw requested that it not be shown: 'For many reasons it is desired may not become publick in the neighbourhood of the proprietor.'²⁶ Not only did fragments removed from the original bed in Shaw's collection come to decorate his house, but it served as a model repeatedly for pieces of furniture that he claimed to be ancient ancestral pieces. He clearly appreciated the bed's historic nature, and, using it as a model for his false ancestral productions, it clearly helped substantiate the forgeries' purported lineage. The Henry VII bed was the most significant item in his collection; the Radcliffe Bed, sold at auction by Bonham's, Oxford, on 30 April 2014, was also in his collection; he slept in it, and it remained at St Chad's until 1920 when it was depicted in the sale catalogue.²⁷ Unlike Shaw's forgeries, its ornament and form failed to influence his deceitful antiquarian productions; indeed, the furniture depicted around the Radcliffe bed in the 1920 auction catalogue photograph, including a chair and chest-on-stand, are derived from the Henry VII bed.

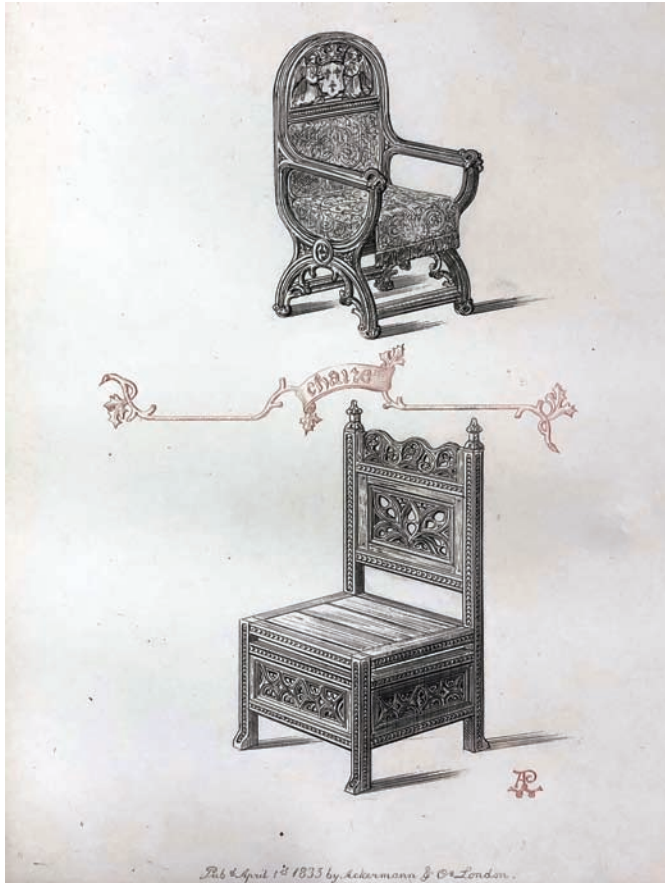
Shaw's repeated and extensive re-use of the form and ornament from the Henry VII bed to guide the creation of newly made old pieces of 'faked' ancestral furniture seems to contradict a comment made recently characterising Shaw's antiquarian method, that he aimed 'to interpret and revive medieval England in spirit rather than archaeological fact. If genuine artefacts did not fully embody that spirit then they could legitimately be improved until they did'.²⁸ Shaw admitted to the Duke of Northumberland's emissary, Richard Burd, that the Radcliffe Bed was composite and, hence, not completely historic: Shaw 'showed me a Magnificent bed though alas as he said put together and I fancied not quite in truth but he said the parts to which seemed so were one when he got them'.²⁹

The level of Shaw's interference in the bed is far from certain. Bowett has claimed recently that the 'footposts are wholly bogus and must also be by Shaw',³⁰ and it is true that the footposts, with their marquetry inlay, are entirely contradictory to the appearance and ethos of the bed's antiquarian character. But the question is whether we can consider the floral patterns consistent with the 1840s and also the hand of Shaw the antiquary and forger of ancestral-type furniture? As this essay has explained thus far, particularly in relation to his historical productions for the Duke of Northumberland *et al.*, Shaw would have certainly adopted an historically complementary style to fill in the bed's 'blanks'. Contrary to Bowett's suggestion, it seems reasonable to pare back the breadth and dept of Shaw's interference in the bed.³¹



Shaw's work at Chetham's Library

Another significant, and related, collection of Shaw's work is held at the oldest public library in the English-speaking world: Chetham's, Manchester. This includes a sideboard, a table, and a suite of chairs, pieces that are similar in iconographic and stylistic terms to his other documented productions. Contrary to Bowett's suggestion that a bookshelf made from the headboard of a bed that is now preserved at the library served as his primary source of ornament for his antiquarian forgeries, despite the absence of an Adam and Eve, most of his furniture, including the pieces supplied to Chetham's, instead refer directly to the Henry VII bed.³² Shaw's table could not be mistaken for a medieval example, given its form and pared-back, Victorian appearance: it lacks the mass of medieval examples, although the



9 A.W.N. Pugin, 'Chairs' from *Gothic Furniture of the 15th Century* (1835). NK760 P8 185-+ Oversize. Paul Mellon Collection, Yale Center for British Art

10 A.W.N. Pugin, Chair from Scarisbrick Hall, Lancashire, c.1838. CIRC.236-1951. Victoria and Albert Museum, London

11 Fireback for the Audit Room, Chetham's Library, c. 1850. Photograph: Peter N. Lindfield

12 Sideboard, Chetham's Library, c. 1850. Photograph: Peter N. Lindfield

13 Detail of the Sideboard's apron, Chetham's Library, c. 1850. Photograph: Peter N. Lindfield



table-top's outer edge is nevertheless ornamented with the engrailed and trefoil-leaf border derived from the rails of Henry VII's bed, and the tapered octagonal legs with cusped panels on the faces are far more akin to fashionable Gothic design included in books and serials on taste, such as *Ackermann's Repository of Arts* (especially 1825–27), or overtly architectural Gothic church furniture, for example, his work at St Chad's, Rochdale, from 1847 (Pl 7).³³

The associated chairs (Pl 8) reveal an indebtedness not only to the ornamental vocabulary derived from the Henry VII bed, such as the inclusion of the acorn (for fertility) in the cresting, but also, it seems, furniture designed by A.W.N. Pugin, in particular the unusual round-headed cresting to the back, and the X-frame-like legs. This type of chair, with the distinctive back and legs, admittedly with the latter running along the sides, rather than on front and back faces as in the Chetham's examples, was depicted in the plate 'Chairs' from Pugin's *Gothic Furniture of the 15th Century* (1835) (Pl 9).³⁴ In particular, the semi-circular cresting to the back is used on both occasions to articulate an heraldic achievement: Pugin's design depicts the Royal arms of France, and the griffin sergeant for Humphrey Chetham (1580–1653) is employed



by Shaw. There is no documentation to indicate that Shaw included the Chetham griffin to suggest the chairs' centuries-old provenance, even though the form agrees with what Pugin presented as a 15th-century design: it resonates equally with the tradition of displaying armorials on hall chairs especially in the 18th century.³⁵ Pugin also designed chairs of this type for Scarisbrick Hall, Lancashire, c1838, as part of his work on the home for Charles Scarisbrick (1801–60), and two of them are now in the Victoria and Albert Museum (Pl 10).³⁶

This type of X-frame chair also appeared on Plate VI of Samuel Rush Meyrick's *Specimens of Ancient Furniture Drawn from Existing Authorities* (1836) depicting a chair dated to the time of Richard II in the Vestry of York Minster: the X-frame legs run side to side as in the Chetham's examples, but the back lacks any carved ornament. Pugin's model appears to be the most likely model guiding Shaw's chairs for the library.

A cast-iron fireback in the Audit Room of Chetham's (Pl 11) emphasises the range of materials in Shaw's workshop. It again represents the quartered pre-1603 royal arms flanked by a lion and greyhound, as had become established for Henry VII. Duplicates of this were cast: another exists at Lichfield's Guildhall, which was refurbished in 1846–48. A carved version of these arms was used in the tester of the Radcliffe Bed, which Shaw cobbled together from an Elizabethan example for his own use. It was sold from St Chad's in 1920, depicted in the plate 'Bed over Dining Room' and auctioned subsequently at Bonham's on 30 April 2014 without this attribution, and in the belief the arms might be pre-Elizabethan.³⁷



Further uses of medieval salvage

Shaw's most striking and intriguing production for Chetham's Library is the sideboard (Pl 12). The majority of the ornament is derived from the Henry VII bed, such as the often-repeated engaged shafts inscribed with the diamond pattern, while the pedestals' windows are filled with a tracery pattern taken directly from alternating panels on the bed's footboard, and the stage's organic panelling is also derived from the bed. A hexagonal diaper pattern carved into the sideboard's pedestals above the ogee arches nevertheless demonstrates a broadening out of Shaw's source material: it is taken almost exactly (in form and floral augmentation of the diaper's compartments) from the early-16th-century posts of a cut-and-shut bookcase at Chetham's.³⁸ Contrary to Bowett's



suggestion, however, the Henry VII bed remained Shaw's most important and repeatedly plundered mine of ornament for historic, antiquarian furniture, including this sideboard. Unlike the chairs that reference Humphrey Chetham heraldically, the sideboard's apron depicts the impaled (rather than quar-tered) arms of France (modern) and England, supported by a dragon (dexter) and greyhound collared (sinister) belonging to Henry VII; given that the Royal arms of England are ordinarily quartered rather than impaled this is irregular, not only in historic terms, but also in Shaw's output (Pl 13).

Even more curious are two shields now detached from the sideboard for safety, but originally placed between the pinnacles at either extremity of the backboard (Pl 14, Pl 15, Pl 16). Like the Henry VII marriage bed, and despite the impressive range of 150 growth rings on the base of these coats of arms, it has been impossible to dendro date these examples of carved oak. One depicts the arms of France (modern), and the other of England: the individual shields that comprise the royal arms almost consistently from 1406 to 1603 (including Henry VII). What makes them especially noteworthy is the heraldic paraphernalia accompanying each shield: supporters, crest, and forked banderole stylistically echoing that on the Henry VII bed, complete with motto 'Dieu et Mon Droit'. These additions are specific to the English Royal arms and do not comply with commonly recognised heraldic standards when applied to the separated shields of France and England. The supporters are similarly taken from the quartered Royal arms but applied irregularly to the individual shields, and the choice of griffin on sinister is also highly unusual. Henry VII had a dragon and greyhound; Henry VIII adopted those supporters initially, and then a lion and dragon as an alternative after c1528, with the latter supporters becoming standard until the death of Elizabeth I. Is it possible that these two highly unusual achievements are part of Shaw's corpus of faked late-medieval furniture? He had after all made mistakes, presenting the incorrect number of fusils on some shields incorporated into the Duke of Northumberland's furniture. The choice of griffin matches Henry VII's arms found in a fire back at Shaw's house in Upper Mill, an achievement that Shaw was happy to recreate. RS Burd, the Duke of Northumberland's agent, wrote on 10 May 1848:

... happening to be in Manchr come over to see his furniture ... in this [Drawing] room was a magnificent chimney piece all well in character though as he told me collected and put together no arms or heraldic inscriptions were there except a new one in paint of their own arms... I am sorry I do not recollect any more of these shields, but they are new – the fine plate the arms of Henry seventh a Lion and a griffin supporters are placed in the back like a reredos he promised me a cast of this his own design if I wished.³⁹

The claimed appearance of these arms, akin to a reredos, also matches the arms' original placement on the Chetham's sideboard, and Shaw's willingness to recreate the arms of England illustrates his disposition to fabrication. But he would not in all likelihood have created such unprecedented shields for royal arms, the best-referenced examples of all heraldry: by presenting the regular supporters of Henry VII on the apron of the sideboard (as well as the iron firebacks and Radcliffe bed tester) Shaw confirmed he was familiar with what was one of the best-known of royal arms.

On closer inspection a clear rationale emerges. These carved arms are set on flat bases that bear score-lines that mark out the positions of two trimmed-off dowels unrelated to fixings on this furniture of Shaw's. Their oak appears significantly older than the sideboard, the surfaces showing splits and abrasions quite at odds with Shaw's fresh, golden oak, and each side of the arms to the height of the banderole is noticeably crisp, indicating that these carved panels were cut down. This physical evidence suggests that they were applied as corner buttresses connecting the headboard posts and the now-lost side rails, much in the manner of the Bretton Hall bed currently in Temple Newsam House, Leeds. These pieces were therefore reused by Shaw. Furthermore, the beasts and the loop-forked banderoles are very similar to those on the marriage bed, suggesting the same 15th-century workshop of carvers.

If they were part of associated furniture broken up after the Civil War, then they would represent yet a further example of Shaw's casual use of heraldry as palimpsests in decorative arrangements, like the fate of the bed's royal arms inappropriately adorning a doorway in his house. The unexpected character of the heraldry may reflect the tumult of Henry VII's improbable arrival only one year after the College of Arms was founded in 1484, their purpose to regulate the freedoms offered by the language of heraldry through the mechanism



14 Detached Arms of France (moderne), from the Chetham's Sideboard, c1480s. Photograph: Peter N Lindfield

15 Detached Arms of England, from the Chetham's Sideboard, c. 1480s. Photograph: Peter N Lindfield

16 Shaw's sideboard at Chetham's before the coats of arms were removed. Photograph: Jonathan Foyle

of visitations.⁴⁰ Henry VII may have had no such immediate concerns in the aftermath of a murderous battle that involved regicide, and indeed he evicted the College from The Coldharbour, which had been given to them by Richard III, in order to refurbish and give it to his mother Margaret Beaufort, Countess of Richmond and Derby.

Upon claiming the throne, there was no inevitable heraldic formula for Henry VII, beyond the quartered arms of England: as his identity was a matter of choice, he and his advisors must have trawled the visual codification of previous monarchs in order to cast his own values. The first principle of the 'Wars of the Roses' was asserting the claim over the right of descent from Edward III (1327–77). Henry's Edwardian bloodline ran through his mother, and so the griffin may well refer to Edward III's use of the beast in his private seal, made more appropriate in this context in that he was the first monarch to quarter the French and English arms, and was the originator of the heraldic red rose of Lancaster, building the 'Rose Tower' at Windsor Castle as an inner sanctum.⁴¹ Through his mother's Lancastrian descent, Henry VII consistently used the red rose as his own symbol. The griffin may almost instantly have been replaced by the greyhound and dragon, but this mutability is not unique: another example of Henry VII's heraldic experimentation may be seen through his confidante Bishop Courtenay of Exeter, who set a similar coat of arms above his fireplace in the Bishop's Palace of Exeter Cathedral, flanked by two greyhounds. Given these factors, the most likely explanation is that the shields were acquired by Shaw at around the time in 1842 that he viewed, took possession of, and restored what we now know to be the Henry VII and Elizabeth of York marriage bed. At around the same time as he dismantled the bed, repaired its structure and re-used its arms, he chose to incorporate these loose shields into the sideboard destined

for Chetham's in order to lend it an English royal association, conjuring an air of prestige without understanding the true significance of what he had salvaged.⁴²

Shaw apparently sold the bed quietly and turned toward architectural design, probably attempting to avoid being caught red-handed with the quarry for his serial fakes. In this, he was the architect of his own misfortune. In 1848 *The Gentleman's Magazine* published an eight-page open letter addressed from Shaw to Dearden, concerning the supposed antiquity of what was in reality the recently reconstructed and furnished Brougham Castle, Cumbria.⁴³ His motive was to secure a nationally visible reputation as an authority on archaeology at the same time as Dearden's patronage, as a bogus brass memorial plaque made for Brougham in 1847, almost certainly Shaw's own work, heralds the character of Dearden's more substantial commissions within Rochdale church. But Shaw's fragrant and highly inaccurate letter back-fired badly. His claims were lampooned by scholarly antiquarians who 'grieved on account of the violence done to archaeological science'. By way of reply to Shaw, they eloquently dismantled his claims for the antiquity of a building that was in parts but three years old.⁴⁴ This published response stung Shaw, exposing his lack of scholarship and the dubious nature of his claims. And it is now clear that he had much to hide, as he had just supplied a series of audacious furniture forgeries to Lord Stanley, to the Duke of Northumberland, and to the Earl of Bradford, with his word as guarantee.⁴⁵ Nevertheless, he continued to supply the Duke of Northumberland with pieces until at least 1850, because the Duke felt them to be consonant with Salvin's neo-Gothic structure.⁴⁶

George Shaw's forgeries failed to fool his contemporaries, and with the benefit of a century-and-a-half of subsequent scholarship they appear today as caricatures. But if he had possessed the skill to scrutinise, research, identify, and present his discovery, he might have had no need to bolster his fortunes through criminal pretensions, for in 1851 the newly-founded Victoria and Albert Museum could have obtained from him an outstanding royal treasure as the centrepiece for its British Galleries, and our understanding of royal material culture at the dawn of the Tudor monarchy would have been much richer.

*This essay is part of a larger research project to identify survivals of pre-Civil War royal chattels and their uses through scientific analyses, documentation, and art-historical evidence. This began in 2013 when Dr Jonathan Foyle first examined and then later attributed the Henry VII Marriage Bed discussed in this essay. In 2010 the bed emerged from a hotel in Chester to be sold at auction as an unattributed lot, described as 19th century, and was noticed and purchased by Ian Coulson of 'The Langley Collection'. Following the bed's public exhibition at Auckland Palace (2014), Hever Castle (2015), and at an ICON-sponsored conference (2019) on a range of research findings at the V&A, London, Jonathan and Peter are currently working on an edited collection of essays on the Henry VII Marriage Bed and related discoveries. Peter Lindfield's examination of George Shaw, the bed's Victorian discoverer and owner, and an audacious forger of ancient furniture who used it as his primary model for authoritative (if misunderstood) form and detail, is the subject of a forthcoming essay and a chapter in his forthcoming monograph on forged antiquarian material culture of the 18th and early 19th centuries.

- 1 Adam Bowett, 'New Light on the Ordsall Hall Bed', *Regional Furniture Society Newsletter* Spring, no. 72 (2020), pp8–9, and Adam Bowett, 'Antiquarianism in Early Victorian Rochdale: The Trinity Chapel at St Chad's', *Regional Furniture* 34 (2020), pp143–61.
- 2 Giles Shaw's woollen mill was liquidated on 9 August 1848, the contents sold by an auctioneer called Ousey. Details of George's architectural work and furnishing can be found in the relevant Pevsner guides: R Harman and N Pevsner: *Yorkshire West Riding: Sheffield and the South*, New Haven and London 2017, and C Hartwell and N Pevsner: *Lancashire: North*, New Haven and London 2009, are the main volumes. St Chad's now serves as Uppermill Library.
- 3 The majority of archival material related to his forgeries is spread between Chetham's Library, the archives at Oldham, Liverpool, and Bolton, and the collection of the Duke of Northumberland at Alnwick Castle, Northumberland. This furniture is explored in detail in a forthcoming essay by Peter Lindfield.
- 4 Shaw's 'dark stained furniture' was viewed in early May 1848 by RS Burd, the agent of the Duke of Northumberland, who was told that Shaw's ancestors had been in the 'neighbourhood since the time of Henry the 8th', and he observed that 'he [Shaw] has a peculiar method of making every thing assume a fine black or brown tinge'. Alnwick Castle, The Archives of the Duke of Northumberland, DP/D4/1/99, 10 May 1848.
- 5 See recent scholarly discussion of the Henry VII bed in HLS Morgan, *Beds and Chambers in Late Medieval England: Readings, Representations and Realities*, York 2017, pp7, 97–102.
- 6 Bernard Andre recorded the preparation of a marriage bed and other suitable decorations (*The Life of Henry VII* trans Hobbins, New York 2011, p34). Paul Binski, *The Painted Chamber*, London 1986, reconstructs the enclosure at 11 ft in width, precisely double the 5'6 of this bed set against the mural created for Edward I. The bed's width, the inner proportions and the bedstock panels, the walkway around the bed, and the tripartite form of the front crest were all dictated by the arcaded mural framing the coronation of Edward the Confessor on the supposed site of his death.
- 7 William Campbell, ed, *Materials for a History of the Reign of Henry VII*, London 1877, pp172–74.
- 8 Ibid, p168.
- 9 See Helen Hughes, *The Paradise Bed—Paint Analysis*. London 2013, pp4–71.
- 10 Victor Chinnery: *Oak Furniture: The British Tradition*, Woodbridge 1979, pp389–91.
- 11 Manchester, Chetham's Library, Raines/2/2/178, 5 October 1842.
- 12 Manchester, Chetham's Library, Raines/2/2/54, 11 October 1842.
- 13 Andy Moir, *Dendrochronological Analysis of Oak Carvings from St Chad's House, Uppermill, and Chetham's Library, Greater Manchester: Tree-Ring Services Report*, OLUM/47/19, Mitcheldean, Gloucestershire, Tree-Ring Services 2019.
- 14 Bowett 'Antiquarianism', p160. A detailed exploration of this bed, now in The Langley Collection, and Shaw's copies made after it, is in preparation by Foyle and Lindfield as a reply to Bowett's essay in *Regional Furniture*.
- 15 E-mail sent from Victory Chinnery on Thursday, 17 February 2011, 12:43.
- 16 See the posts on the 40-minute online film on the bed at <https://vimeo.com/213097913>. The four wainscot posts feature royal initials 'hR', a fleur-de-lys, Roman numeral assembly marks including 'IX' which demonstrates their minimal number in lining a room, and a typical early apotropaic taper-burn mark. They were cut down to be used as perfunctory structural timbers which is only likely in an age unappreciative of their quality and royal identity, namely at the Civil War. They were catalogued by early antiques specialist Joanna Booth as being 'c1520', by their self-evident age and through stylistic reference to Chinnery's *Oak Furniture: The British Tradition*, gauging them to have followed the Thomas Stanley bed. However the posts date to 1485 or soon after: they are carved by the same hand as the bed, bear an iron pin for finials similar to the bed's iron finial screws and bear the same undatable tree-ring sequence as found throughout the bed frame, which is of high quality tight-grained European oak, very likely from the east of the continent (see note below).
- 17 A separate paper will explain the sometimes contradictory scientific analyses and their reconciliation.
- 18 Liverpool, Liverpool Record Office, 920 DER (13) 1/146/1, 7 January 1842.
- 19 Oldham, Oldham Local Studies and Archives, M175/1/1, fol 73.
- 20 Ibid, fol 182.

- 21 Sotheby's London, *The Age of Oak and Walnut*, lot 132, 14 September 2005.
- 22 For example, the seven stars that feature on the Henry VII Marriage Bed – an esoteric reference relating to the stars of Boötes that, according to the Book of Job, represents the Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit, divisible into the four cardinal virtues (headstock) and the Trinity (footboard) – are here reduced to a meaninglessly decorative two stars.
- 23 Alnwick Castle, The Archives of the Duke of Northumberland, DP/D4/1/99, 24 September 1847.
- 24 Ibid.
- 25 Ibid, 20 March 1848.
- 26 Bolton, Bolton Archives and Local Studies Service, ZBR/5/9/13, esp fols 2–3.
- 27 Allen Mellor & Co, "St. Chad's," *Uppermill, Saddleworth, Yorks.: Catalogue of the Valuable Antique & Modern Furniture etc., including A very fine collection of Old Oak*, Oldham 1920, opp p19 (lot 509, p22).
- 28 Bowett 'New Light', p9.
- 29 Alnwick Castle, The Archives of the Duke of Northumberland, DP/D4/1/99, 10 May 1848.
- 30 Bowett 'New Light', p9.
- 31 It seems likely that the Henry VII bed was hidden from Burd on his visit to St Chad's; if he had caught glimpse of it, he would have immediately identified the source of Shaw's forgeries, and, in particular 'the Paradise Bed'.
- 32 Adam Bowett, 'The Great Chair of Sir Ralph Warburton, 1603', *Regional Furniture*, 333 (2019), p118.
- 33 *The Ecclesiologist*, 8 (1848), pp59–60, was quite flattering about Shaw's furnishing of the 'Dearden Chapel', in large measure based on the details of the Henry VII marriage bed, which may have given him some encouragement to produce more pseudo-antique furnishings. However, *The Gentleman's Magazine and Historical Review* (1852), p60, was excoriating of his 'medieval mockeries', made to represent Dearden's half-bogus historical pedigree. Following this criticism, in 1883 Shaw's work was dispersed throughout the church.
- 34 See also H Shaw and SR Meyrick, *Specimens of Ancient Furniture Drawn from Existing Authorities*, London 1836, pl chairs.
- 35 London, Victoria and Albert Museum, W16A-1962 (c.1700–25), and W15-1953 (c1770–80).
- 36 London, Victoria and Albert Museum, CIRC.236-1951, and CIRC.237:1, 2-1951.
- 37 Lot 197. See <https://www.bonhams.com/auctions/22148/lot/197/>. RS Burd, the Duke of Northumberland's agent, noted that the bed had been assembled from parts: it is recorded as a 'magnificent bed though which as he said put together and I fancied not quite ... but he said the parts to which seemed so were one when he get them'. Alnwick Castle, The Archives of the Duke of Northumberland, DP/D4/1/99, 10 May 1848.
- 38 The hexagonal diaper is derived from the columns of a bookcase at Chetham's 'Presented to Chetham's Hospital by William Hulton Esq one of the feoffees 12 April 1827', according to its brass plaque. It was made from the remains of a bed of c1510 made for Adam Hulton (d 1517), the rails of which were based on the leaf-and-blossom design of the clearly influential Henry VII bed. Shaw, however, believed it had always been a Tudor buffet, no doubt suitable quarry for a sideboard, while he copied it wholesale as the model for one of his forgeries, a buffet now at Warkworth Castle, with Percy heraldry applied. Its pierced back panels are nevertheless based on the footboard of the Henry VII bed.
- 39 Alnwick Castle, The Archives of the Duke of Northumberland, DP/D4/1/99, 10 May 1848.
- 40 For visitations, see especially the work of A Ailes, such as 'Artists and Artwork of the Heraldic Visitations 1530–1687', *The Coat of Arms*, 10, Series 3, Part 2 (2014), pp69–82, and 'The Origins of the Heralds' Visitations in England and Wales', *Proceedings of the XXXII International Congress of Genealogical and Heraldic Sciences*, forthcoming.
- 41 The best account of recent discoveries on the Edwardian palace, including the Rose Tower, is S Brindle *Windsor Castle: A Thousand Years of a Royal Palace*, London 2018.
- 42 St Leonard's, Middleton, features a Shaw lectern with a cut-down diaper post featuring the initials and scallop-shell of James Stanley, Bishop of Ely (c1466–1515), which represents a further local version of the royal bed's example.
- 43 In *The Gentleman's Magazine* 32 (1849) it is noted in 'Minor Correspondence' (p2) that a brass inscription at Brougham Hall commemorating the unrecorded character Henry Brougham (d 1570) was 'a modern antique, though the skill of the workman has done his best to give it the appearance of some antiquity. It was laid down in 1847'.
- 44 *The Gentlemen's Magazine* 29 (1848), pp618–20. In the following issue (30 (1848), pp136–41) 'Old Subscribers' answered Shaw's objections to being challenged: 'Let him answer our objections – he is on his trial. We it was who taxed him with writing false history; therefore the onus *probandi* rests with him' (p137).
- 45 Nevertheless, Shaw produced a series of monumental stone crosses (eg, Cawthorne, Ashworth Gap) in the 1850s, which still drew on the themes of the Paradise Bed he had become accustomed to.
- 46 The envelope in the Alnwick archives that contains the correspondence with Shaw from 1847–50 is labelled in an old hand: 'Memo about furniture sold to Duke Algernon as having been ancient Percy property but which was made up.'