

The Seaxe

Newsletter of the Middlesex Heraldry Society

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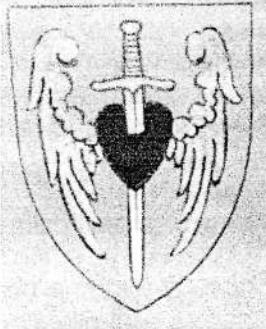
No. 39

(Founded 1976)

February 2002

Christmas Greetings

Once more we would like to share our good fortune having received a beautiful hand-made card from Sedge and Hazel Smith.



Sedge writes- *Mary was the only person who was both in the stable and at the foot of the cross. The heart and wings signify the emotional and spiritual aspects of our faith, while the sword, with its echo of the cross in its hilt and guard, exemplifies the brutality that crucified*

Christ, and still destroys so many of mankind.

The badge is described as:- *Azure a Heart Gules with Wings Or and pierced by a Sword Argent with Hilt Or.* (We apologise for our poor representation which does not do justice to the actual tinctures – real gold and silver on the card.....wow! Perhaps next year – who knows?)

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SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT

Owing to the absence of our Chairman, a member of the Committee and two senior Members of the Society on 19th September the date of the **AGM** and the talk by **Stephen Kibbey** has been altered to **Thursday, 26th September**. Please amend your programme accordingly.

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Anthony L. Jones

This is the rather frightening title of our good friend **Tony Jones** who we all know if only for his delightfully drawn and beautifully coloured sheets on so many diverse subjects. Now he has turned his hand to DIY and his design for a hypothetical coat-of-arms is fully up to his usual high standard. It also shows that, apart from his artistic abilities, he has led a full and active life and has obviously learned much from various walks of life. In turn this learning has enabled him to produce a range of extremely well researched and well written books under the envelope title of **Heraldry in Glamorgan** which, unfortunately, he has had to curtail because of the high publishing costs involved. We are grateful to **Tony** for allowing us to publish the results of his labours and again we apologise to the artist for the presentation which does not do justice to the actual tinctures.

An Exercise in Heraldic Design



Shield: *Per fess dancetty Silver and Vert in base a pale lozengy Silver and Sable and in chief an eagle volant and affronty head lowered to dexter Azure.*

Crest: *Issuant from an astral crown Gold a dragon's head erased Gules.*

Mantling: *Vert doubled Silver.*

Motto: *fe dāl am daro* ('He will pay who strikes me').

The shield is divided dancetty Silver and Vert, symbolising the green mountains and skies surrounding the Welsh valley of my birth. The pale of alternating Silver and black lozenges in the base of the shield denotes a coal mine shaft and the period in my youth when I hewed coal in the now defunct Coegnant Colliery, three hundred metres beneath my valley. The blue eagle flying horizontally (Volant) in the chief of the shield is part of the official badge of the Royal Air Force, epitomising the twenty-seven years I served in that branch of the Armed Forces. The dragon's head in the crest is a reference to my Welsh ancestry, and the Astral Crown forms part of the badge of the Royal Air Force Regiment in which Corps I served. The green and white mantling as well as being the primary tinctures of the shield is also the colours anciently associated with Wales, from at least the 13th century.

The choice of motto is a further reflection of my military background.

In the time of Queen Dick

by Cynthia Lydiard Cannings

No.11 - CUNNINGHAME OF CUNNINGHAME

On the run from assassins in the pay of the cruel usurper **MacBeth**, poor **Malcolm Ceannmór** was hidden from pursuit by one **Friskin McFriskin**, who, when the rightful king burst from the woods into the clearing where his bothy stood, was busy with his man piling hay.

Leaping intuitively to the right conclusion **Friskin** immediately pointed to the heap. When his liege lord had wriggled into it as best he could, **Friskin** swiftly forked more hay on top of him. *Ower, forrrk ower!* he was encouraging his man, more slow on the uptake, when the armed mercenaries ran into the clearing.

Ye mun see frae the size o' the heap he said, *that we've been here a guid half 'oo-errr. Naeboddy's passed in that time, ye ken,* he expanded, truthfully. And off they went.

When, in 1058, he came into his own, a grateful **Malcolm** created **Friskin Thane of Cunninghame**, and suggested that both arms and motto were ready made. And thus it is that the **Cunninghames** of **Cunninghame** (disdaining both their quick-witted ancestor's humble name and his worse accent) adopted **Over, Fork Over!** for their motto, and bear *argent a shakefork sable* to this very day.

(First published in the Norfolk Standard of January 2001 and reprinted with the kind permission of the editor and the author.)



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Militaria No.32 - The Worcestershire Regiment

Raised in 1694 as **Farrington's Regiment** it became the **29th** (or the **Worcestershire**) **Regiment of Foot** in 1782. Its junior partner was raised in 1701 as **Charlemont's Regiment** and became the **36th** (or the **Herefordshire**) **Regiment of Foot** also in 1782. The two regiments became the **1st** and **2nd Battalions** of the **Worcestershire Regiment** in 1881.



Another regiment which went in in for nicknames in a big way - the **29th/36th** were known as *The Vein Openers* from their dubious privilege of causing the first bloodshed at the *Boston Massacre* which heralded the American War

of Independence. In 1770. American colonial discontent with England was increasing and the regiment, on garrison duty in Boston, had a detachment guarding the Customs House when it was pelted by a mob. During a scuffle a soldier mistook a shout from the crowd for an order and he fired. Other shots followed and four rioters were killed and several wounded. The name was given to them by the Americans. *The Eversworded 29th* came from the time when the regiment was serving in North America in 1746 and their officers were attacked in their Mess by Indians. The Indians were beaten off, but to guard against any similar attack in the future, the unique custom of officers wearing swords at dinner in the Mess was instituted. The custom is now observed by the Captain of the Week and the Orderly Officer at dinner and on certain other occasions. *Guards of the Line* - one of only two of the despised "Feet" which came about from the long association with the Coldstreams who, until 1856, wore their buttons in pairs - Coldstream style. *Brummagem Guards* through drawing on Birmingham for many of its recruits. *The Saucy Greens* from the grass green facings on their full-dress uniforms. Other nicknames were *The Firms*, *Old and Bold* and *The Star of the Line*.

The motto of the regiment is **FIRM**

The regimental badge of the **Worcestershire Regiment**



is described as — *the star of the Order of the Garter* (having been raised by an officer serving in The Coldstream Guards). *Within the Garter the Lion of the Royal Crest upon a tablet FIRM.*

The **Worcestershire Regiment** merged with the **Sherwood Foresters** in 1970 to become the **Worcestershire and Sherwood Foresters**

Regiment. And so two more illustrious regiments have lost their identities.....and what a stupid title!

The badge of the amalgamated regiment is described as:- *the badge of the former Sherwood Foresters above a tablet FIRM, all on the Star of the Order of the Garter.* Rumour has it that the only known nickname is just as stupid.....*The Woofers!*

The **29th** and **36th** **Regiments** have fought in all the major theatres of war and battle honours earned go back as far as Ramillies (1706). Among many others the Peninsular War added Pyrenees, Nivelle, Corunna, Talavera and Albuhera. From the Second Sikh War came Chillianwallah, Goojerat and Punjaub. The Regiment, although involved in the Boer War, was awarded only one battle honour - that of South Africa (1900-02).



From the Great War came Retreat from Mons, Marne, Aisnes, Armentieres, Loos, Ypres, Albert, Cambrai, Somme, Arras, Messines, Menin Road, Passchendaele, Suvla and Gallipoli. In WWII the regiment earned the battle honours Rhineland, North West Europe, and Kohima (Burma).

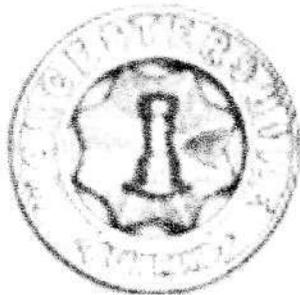
The **Victoria Cross** has been won by nine members of the regiment – all in the Great War. **Private Frederick George Dancox** won his VC at Namur Crossing in Belgium – he was due to go on leave four days after his award was gazetted and the civic leaders of Worcester planned an official reception – they even went to Shrub Hill station to meet him - but **Dancox** never arrived. Although granted fourteen days leave a German counter attack delayed his departure and during the fighting, not far from Cambrai, he was struck on the head by a piece of shrapnel and killed. A grateful country made little or no effort to help **Ellen Dancox**, his widow, or their children and after a struggle to make ends meet she was driven to selling her husband's VCfor £5! However **Private Dancox** is now remembered by a sheltered housing development in Worcester which bears his name and his VC is a treasured possession of the Regimental Museum. The Regimental Headquarters are now at Norton Barracks, Worcester and the recruitment area is Worcestershire, Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire.

♦ ♦ ♦ ♦ ♦

The badges not already described are :-

Other Ranks' Helmet Plate Centres 1881 -1901

On circlet: At top Worcestershire; at bottom the motto **FIRM**; In centre a broad eight pointed star with two points at top, on this a castle with one turret. Worn from 1881 to 1885. From 1885 to 1890 the star was altered to a more delicate design and with only one point at top. (Not illustrated).



The centre device entirely changed to an elongated eight pointed star on which is a Lion surrounded by the Garter proper. Below the Garter a scroll inscribed **FIRM**. Worn from 1890 to 1901.



The Glengarry Badge -

1874 -1881 - a strap inscribed *Worcestershire* surmounted by a Victorian crown. In the centre the numerals 29 - all in brassalso an eight pointed star on which is the Garter proper. In the centre the numerals 29 - all in brass. A figure of eight scroll with laurel-ends inscribed **FIRM** above the numerals 36 - all in brass.



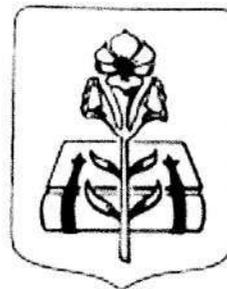
A strap inscribed *Herefordshire Regiment* surmounted by a Victorian crown. In the centre the numerals 36 and above these a **scroll inscribed FIRM**. All in brass.

Worcestershire Volunteer Regiment - 1914 -1919 - on an ornamental shield a diamond on which is a pear-tree bearing fruit. In bronze.

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Saint Antony of Padua

Saint Antony (1195-1231) was born in Lisbon and was first an Augustinian monk. Before entering the Franciscan order in 1220 and becoming one of its most active propagators. He preached in the south of France and Upper Italy and died in Padua in 1231. He was



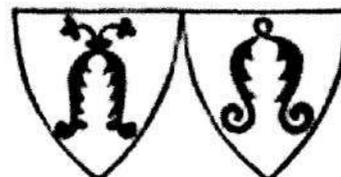
canonised by Pope Gregory IX a year later and legend has it that he preached to the fishes when men refused to hear him - hence he is the patron of the lower animals and is often represented as accompanied by an ass. **Saint Antony** had a phenomenal knowledge of Holy

Scripture, as indicated by the Book which, combined with his eloquence and love of animals, earned him the sobriquet *eldest son of Saint Francis*. He is also a patron of travellers.

His badge is described as:- *gold book, silver lilies with green stems all on a brown field*. The lilies refer to his purity - the stems to his youth.

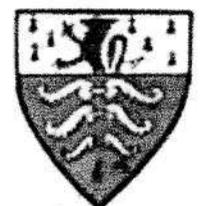
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Did You Know?



A *barnacle* or *brey* is a curb used on a horse's nose when breaking the animal - it has no connection

with the limpet-like crustacean found on the hulls of seagoing craft. It may sometimes be shown expanded as borne by **Geffray de Geneville**:- *Azure three pairs of barnacles expanded in pale Or on a chief Ermine a demi-lyon rampant issuant Gules*.



Publish and be Damned!

On 22nd September last year the *Daily Telegraph* printed an article by Germaine Greer entitled *Do coats of arms reveal the true soul of England?* Believing that our readers would enjoy reading or re-reading this light hearted essay into heraldry we sent an e-mail to the *Daily Telegraph* on 8th October asking for permission to publish the article with suitable acknowledgements.

We received an almost immediate response to the effect that our request would be passed to the people or person concerned who would then communicate with us. Nothing happenedso, on 5th January and again on 10th January this year we sent two further e-mails asking for a reply. We have had no response to either despite our plea of near octogenarianism, being lifelong readers of the *Daily Telegraph* and having agreed a contract with them for us to receive the paper every day. We even suggested that it would have been better if we had been told to "go jump in the lake" rather than to be ignored. It is our opinion that they are so busy boasting about their colossal readership that they have no time for the little man nor for the one time courtesies of life.

Taking the lead from the **Duke of Wellington** who is reputed to have coined the immortal phrase, albeit in a different context, "Publish - and be damned!" - we have decided to press on.....so here goes -

"I knew that if I gave the name cutlasses to the three bilhook lookalikes on the Essex coat of arms,



Telegraph readers would swiftly fill me in — and so they did. My cutlasses are "seaxes", but what a seaxe

might be good for, no one saw fit to tell me.

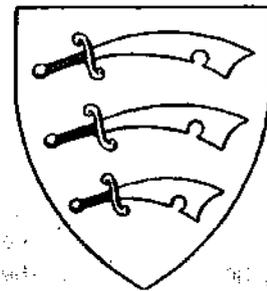
I would have been pleased to discover that they were indeed billhooks, or ancient sickles, or thatcher's knives or fish-gutters, but that would hardly fit in with the notion of a coat of arms, which has to have something to do with fighting, or jousting at the very least. Chances were overwhelmingly that, like the sabres, spears, swords, falchions, scimitars and other hardware to be found charged on shields, seaxes were things for killing people with.

A seaxe is simply a big knife, shown in heraldry with a squared-off end and a deep semicircular notch in the back. Saxons get their name because they were a seaxe-wielding people, though the first unsavoury story about seaxes involves a Jute, namely Hengest, commander-in-chief of the international expeditionary force that came from continental Europe in the mid-fifth century to assist Vortigern in his battles against the Picts and Scots.

When Hengest realised that his picked force of Jutes, Saxons, Frisians and Angles could annihilate his British allies, he is supposed to have said: "Let us grab our seaxes." The rest is not quite history because nobody is really certain that Hengest was real. But the seaxes were;

Englishmen possessed them and tooled up with them well into the second millennium

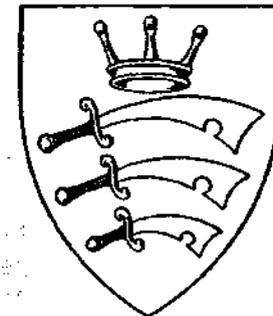
The Essex coat of arms is a field gules (that is, a red ground) charged per fesse (sic) with three seaxes argent, hilts and pommels or, and not as you will see it on some signs, red seaxes on a white



ground. These are supposed to be the arms of the ancient kingdom of the East Saxons, and Essex to be a short way of saying East-Saxony or Ost-Sachsen, reminding the inhabitants of their German forebears.

Irritatingly enough, the same device is used by Mittel-Sachsen or Middlesex, which claims that three seaxes are the arms of the Kingdom of the Middle and East Saxons, and have been used since time immemorial

This is tosh, because heraldry itself did not exist until, 700 years or so after Hengest. Even then, the right to bear arms was to be enjoyed by feudal lords rather than county councils and lesser bureaucracies. Middlesex was granted its arms no longer ago than 1910 and Essex could manage no better than to copy its device in 1932. Middlesex



responded by charging its shield with a Saxon Crown. Other coats of arms have crests, surmounted by prancing beasts or knightly helms or boats or battlements. The arms of Suffolk are surmounted with a whole stack of things, a Viking dragon ship on the sea

within a crown on top of a helm.

Essex is crestless, which is probably a mercy. And there are no supporters, no creatures holding the shield as the lion and the unicorn do the royal arms. All you get is a red shield with three knives lying cutting edge upwards, handles oddly to the left. Were the Saxons lefthanded?

Suffolk arms show a blazing sun rising over the sea (argent azure barry wavy), which seems a lot nicer than three choppers. Other counties have mottoes, but not Essex. Suffolk says: "Guide our



EAST SUFFOLK C.C.

Endeavour." Essex remains shtum. Not a lot of creativity was exerted in 1932 when it was decided that Essex had to have a county coat of arms. We

just stole the best part of the Middlesex arms and left it at that

The attributed arms of East Anglia are three gold crowns on a blue ground, which could have been charged with our seaxes to signify that we lie east of Middlesex. Instead, we are just uncrowned Middlesex.

What message are we sending with our wordless seaxes? This is how it strikes a Canadian: seaxes "were implements of war carried at the belt of every Englishman. Even though the English were busy as farmers and fishermen, they were at heart fighters. Tribe warred against tribe and village against village. Feuds parted households and passions of hatred and vengeance were handed from father to son. A grim joy of fighting was characteristic of the race." So with three seaxes charged on a field of blood, we are boasting of our grim joy of fighting. We could print the device on the breast of every T-shirt worn by every hooligan from Essex or Middlesex. This at last may be the answer to that perennial question about what it means to be English." - *Germaine Greer*



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Things to Come

We have received a letter from **Bill Burgess** *a propos* the **Audley** arms reminding us of an article he wrote for **Seaxe** in January 1985 - with some further thoughts. We are holding this over until the May issue so that time can be devoted to its study before publication.

Kingsbury High School

In an article whose title was the motto of the school, and which was included in **Seaxe** No.37 **Cynthia Lydiard-Cannings** mentioned her old school the Kingsbury County



Grammar. She had forgotten whether or not the badge was simply the arms of Middlesex or if there was a difference. This caused us to begin an e-mail correspondence with the current Head and Deputy Head of the re-named school - all went well until we asked for a blazon of the new

badge which retains only the motto from the old badge. Since then there has been a deathly hush. It looks like spurious heraldry - or could someone throw some light on it - perhaps even a blazon?

Thought for the Month

A well written Life is almost as rare as a well-spent one.

Thomas Carlyle on biographies

Next Meetings

Single Supporters

by E.N. (Pete) Taylor
on Thursday, 21st March

Slater's Travels

by Stephen Slater
on Thursday, 18th April

Heraldry of the Horse

by C. E. J. Smith
on Thursday, 16th May

All meetings are held in the Library,
Ruislip Manor at 8.00pm

The Chiltern Heraldry Group

The Kerry Pedigree

by Marian Miles.
on Saturday, 16th March,
in the Dunsden Village Hall.

The Heraldic Apocrypha

by C. E. J. Smith
on Saturday, 17th November,
in the Long Room
at the Wallingford Community Centre

Meetings begin at 2.30pm and
are followed by a light tea
provided by members.

Visitors welcome.