



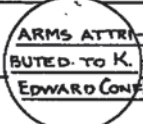



SCREENS ON NORTH SIDE OF PRESBYTERY. [Side towards Chancel]




WEST BAY.

1525   

CENTRAL BAY.

   as above.




EAST BAY.

   as above.




[Side towards Aisle. Not coloured.]

WEST BAY [This has sacred emblems only.]


CENTRAL BAY.

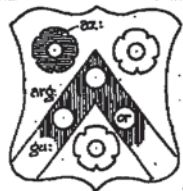
  


EAST BAY.

ARMS AS DESCRIBED BY MR GREENFIELD SHOWN BELOW.

 **FROST.**

 **HAMPTON.**

 **FLEMING.**

M.C. Nisbet. archd. pict.

**ARMORIAL BEARINGS ON THE PRESBYTERY SCREENS,
WINCHESTER CATHEDRAL.**

NOTES ON SOME ARMORIAL BEARINGS
ON THE PRESBYTERY SCREENS,
WINCHESTER CATHEDRAL.

By N. C. H. NISBETT, A.R.I.B.A.

One of the objects of heraldry is to make known the connection of the individual indicated by the armoury with the monument or other object upon which it is displayed. When, however, by some mischance, there appears to be a danger that the facts, truly stated by the herald, are in danger of being misunderstood, an explanation and rectification should be made.

It is with this view that the following notes are offered with reference to certain devices to be found in Winchester Cathedral, upon the screens in the three bays on the north side of the Presbytery, immediately to the east of the tower, viz: those upon which three of the mortuary chests are placed, containing the bones of some of the Saxon kings and bishops, first collected by Bishop Henry de Blois and enclosed in new caskets by Bishop Fox at the time that the screens, which bear the date 1525, were erected. These screens have three shields on each side in each bay, making eighteen in all, but as eight of them require no explanation, we will only draw attention to the remaining ten. We will first notice six upon the south side of the screen, towards the choir. These have all been painted, and, as an error made in the tinctures has caused some confusion, we will describe them in detail.

From the accompanying sketch it will be seen that the easternmost shield in each group bears a chevron between three owls, with the addition of a quatrefoil upon the chevron,

probably a mark of "difference." It will also be seen that in each group the initial letters W.F. occur. In the western bay the letters are plain in character, gilt upon a red shield. In the next bay the letters and shield are of the same tinctures, but ornamented by entwining the letters with looped and knotted cords, gilt like the letters. In the third case the letters are not displayed upon a shield but are worked into one of the foliated decorations between the shields. The three shields bearing arms are all coloured similarly and may be blazoned thus:—*Gules*, on a chevron, between three owls *Argent*, a quatrefoil of the first erroneously made to represent a rose being seeded *or*.

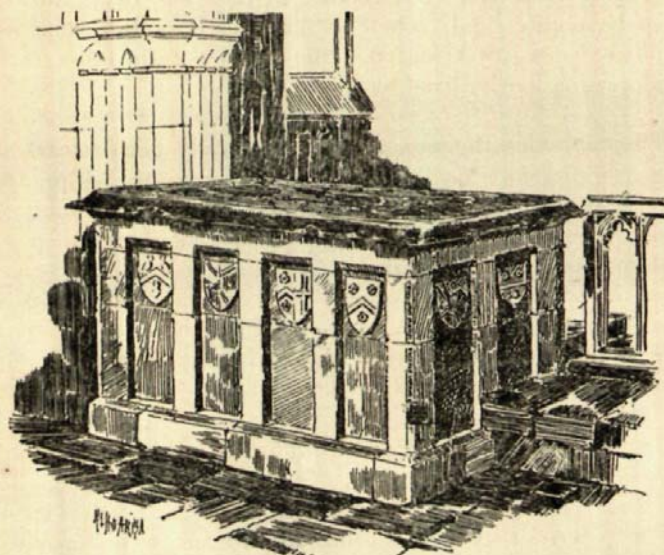
These arms are so nearly identical with those borne by the old Hampshire family of Fleming of Stoneham, which appear upon the Bargate at Southampton,¹ (*Gules*, a chevron between three owls, *Argent*, an ermine spot for difference), that it led to the idea the arms under consideration belonged to a branch of the same family. The confusion seems to have been further increased by the fact, that early in the 18th century the Stoneham estates passed to the family of Willis-Fleming, to which the initial letters already mentioned as repeated in each bay were thought to refer. Their origin and meaning must however be sought elsewhere.

There has always been a tradition that the initials which Milner attributed to an "unknown benefactor" were those of William Frost of Avington, who, as stated by Mr. Greenfield,² was steward to Bishop Fox and gave the manor of Mapledurwell to Corpus Christi College, Oxford, founded by that bishop. He was Sheriff of the county in 1521 and died in 1529. It is with reference to this person that Mr. Greenfield's paper on Stoke Charity may well be studied, and it was on hearing it read and seeing upon the Hampton tomb at Stoke Charity, a shield charged with a "chevron between three owls," indicating one of the alliances of the Hampton family, that it first occurred to the writer that some investigation of the arms in the Cathedral might be desirable:

¹ See Hants F.C. Proceedings, Vol. IV., Part II., page 120., "Heraldry of the Bargate" by B. W. Greenfield, F.S.A.

² See Hants F. C. Proceedings, Volume III part I, p. 3. "Old Stoke Charity" by B. W. Greenfield.

The first step in this further examination went a long way towards solving the problem, for the sixth shield on the south side of the screen was found to be correctly emblazoned with the arms of Hampton (*Argent*, on a chevron *gules*, between three cinquefoils *Azure*, as many bezants). There is a slight inaccuracy in the actual representation, as the centres of the cinquefoils have been carved as "seeded" and gilded, making them appear like blue roses with golden centres, but this is obviously only a workman's error. When however the arms of Hampton are found in such close company with three shields bearing arms resembling those of Frost as given by Mr. Greenfield, it certainly suggests that the colouring of the "chevron and owl" shields may not be quite accurate.



TOMB OF SIR THOMAS HAMPTON AT STOKE CHARITY.

If we now turn our attention to the remaining shields upon the north side of the screen, towards the aisle, we shall find even clearer evidence that the arms are intended to represent those of William Frost. Here the shields are not painted; so the tinctures need not trouble us. The three in the western bay all bear emblems of the Passion and the central ones in

the remaining bays are those of the see of Winchester, so that we have only four to examine. We again find two of the "chevron and owl" coats, one in the centre and one in the eastern bay, proving that we are evidently still in touch with the individual we are attempting to discover.

Also in the eastern bay the same initials W. F. again occur as on the south side of the same bay. The other shield in this group appears to supply the last link in the chain of evidence we require, since it bears the "chevron and owl" coat impaling that of Hampton of Stoke Charity, indicating that the wife of the man, whose arms we find repeated no less than six times, was one of the Hamptons of Stoke Charity. From Mr. Greenfield we learn that in the year 1474 Juliana, second daughter and co-heir of Thomas Hampton, married William Frost, of Avington. She died on 18th June, 1526, predeceasing her husband by three years.

The date upon the screen is, as has already been remarked, 1525, we therefore have a date which falls not only within the life of William Frost but a period when he would be likely to be associated with such work as that undertaken by Bishop Fox. The initial letters which occur four times upon the screen are in agreement with such an assumption, as is also the fact that these screens, as well as those on the south side of the Presbytery, were carried out by Bishop Fox, for whom William Frost acted as steward.

The arms themselves agree with those of the bishop's steward, although inaccurately coloured. If however we assume, that the arms were originally all unpainted, as on the north side, or that if painted they had become defaced and were repainted at a much later date, then the arms, without considering the colouring, agree with those of William Frost, and if coloured would be:—*Argent*, on a chevron *sable* between three owls *gules*, a quatrefoil *azure*.

If the painting was not done until many generations after the death of William Frost, it seems probable that his connection with the screen may have been overlooked, and

the arms mistaken for those of Willis Fleming, to whom the oft repeated initials W.F. were assigned, whose family were well-known as Members of Parliament, Sheriffs, and persons of importance in the county.

The initials H. B. with a P underneath upon the remaining shield on the north side are evidently those of Henry Brook who was elected Prior in 1524. The same initials occur in the stone spandrels of the doorway in the western bay of the screen as well as upon the oak doors themselves.

In conclusion, this opportunity may be taken to draw the attention to the exceptional richness of the Cathedral of Winchester in heraldic emblems, and to suggest that some systematic study of these might be undertaken by members of our Society. This work has been commenced by private students, but I believe nothing has been published. Dr. Andrews, of Basingstoke, has been in communication with some of these outside workers, and if any members are able and willing to give assistance it will be gladly welcomed.

