Coats of Arms of some Ricardian Contemporaries

LAWRENCE T. GREENSMITH

TEWKESBURY ABBEY

715  Foundation of small Benedictine monastery on the site of a hermitage
1102  Re-endowed by Robert FitzHamon
1123  Consecration by the Bishop of Worcester
1230  Gilbert de Clare, Earl of Gloucester, buried in the Abbey, as were nearly all of his Clare, Despenser, Beauchamp and Neville successors as Lord of Tewkesbury; the last named including Isobel Neville and George, Duke of Clarence
1471  Battle of Tewkesbury, after which the Abbey is said to have been reconsecrated

LANGSTROTHER

TEWKESBURY ABBEY
The arms are blazoned as: Red, with a golden cross engrailed. This is correct, but misleading: the blazon does not indicate the nature of the engrailment of this "singular cross of the Abbey," peculiar to Tewkesbury. Engrailment does not specify any number of points; it and their shape can vary according to taste. Here each arm of the cross has only one pair of points. The former Borough of Tewkesbury had arms from 1464. Unsurprisingly, the engrailed cross was the main feature, but it was not that of the Abbey itself. There was also a chief, with a castle (from the old town's seal) between two roses red and white.

SIR JOHN LANGSTROTH, 1416–1471, and the Order of St John of Jerusalem

1416 Born son of Thomas Langstrother of Crosthwaite, and younger brother of Sir William, also of the Order
1453 Castellan of Rhodes
1468 Grand Prior of St John's in England
1469 Treasurer of England
1471 February: Sent by Warwick to fetch Queen Margaret and others from Brittany for the Lancastrian invasion April: With Queen Margaret, Edward, Prince of Wales and others, landed at Weymouth; appointed one of her army leaders May: Captured at Tewkesbury and executed after the Battle; his body was buried in his own Priory at Clerkenwell

Sir John's arms, not in Burke, are in both Fincham and Gayre and blazoned: Silver with a red chevron between three black escallops. Conventional but handsome, and made still more so when augmented with the chief of the Order of St John: Red with a silver cross.

It may seem odd to think of a Grand Prior being in a prominent military position, but the Order of St John was an order both monastic and military; as a former Castellan of Rhodes, Langstrother had also been a Lieutenant Turcoplier and knew his business.

The Order of St John still uses two familiar devices, the augmentation above, and the other familiar as the Maltese Cross badge of St John's Ambulance Brigade. Granted not by the Sovereign but by the Order itself, the arms augmentation is usually ignored by the College of Arms, but not by the Scottish Lyon King of Arms.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. There has been some controversy over the date of the consecration but, despite the 1971 celebrations ostensibly commemorating the 850th anniversary, there is no doubt that it was 1123. See F. B. Bradley-Birt, Tewkesbury (1931), p.55.