

# Coats of Arms of Some Ricardian Contemporaries

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## CANONS OF COVERHAM AND METCALFS OF NAPPA HALL

PERHAPS THE only link between the Canons Regular of Coverham Abbey and the Metcalfs of Nappa Hall is that Richard Gloucester of Middleham was a neighbour of both.

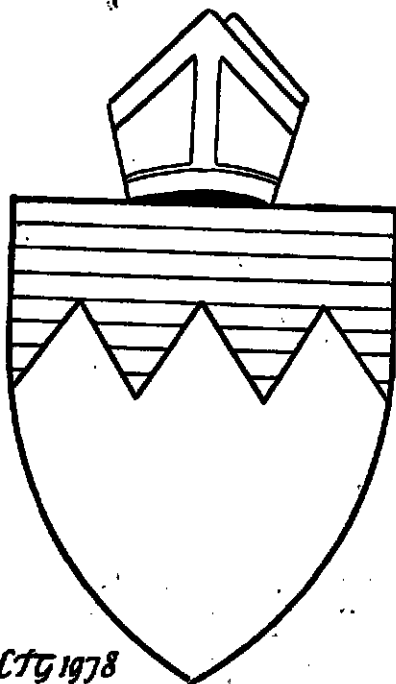
The Premonstratensian CANONS of COVERHAM lived even more regulated lives than many monks. Their Latinized name means no more than that they were founded at Prémontré, near Laon: this was in 1102. Their rules were something stricter than those of the Augustinians, and there was also Cistercian influence.

Coverham Abbey is about 2 miles SW of Middleham (nearer than Jervaux, 4 miles SE). Its community had been founded about 30 years earlier some 15 miles away in Swaledale. The founder had been a daughter of a Lord Chief Justice of King Henry II: she was buried in her priory there. One of her younger sons had succeeded to the Lordship of Middleham and removed the White Canons to Coverham about 1212 (there were good reasons besides mere convenience), where he endowed them with other lands and tenements. The bones of the founder were similarly translated and buried in the new abbey's chapter-house. Thirteen years after Bosworth they were recorded as an abbot and 16 brethren (1498). They survived only 37 years longer: Coverham was one of the many minor monasteries suppressed at the hands of Thomas Cromwell who was thereafter encouraged to tackle the larger ones. What is not clear is whether the community had ever been larger: possibly not. The abbot, in charge of only a minor abbey, would not be the 'mitred abbot' signifying a Lord of Parliament.

The book<sup>1</sup> which supplies most of this information describes the abbey's site as 'one of the most beautiful in Yorkshire . . . Certainly no other ruin in the Riding is cradled so entirely in the heart of the hills.' The place takes its name from the River Cover, a small tributary which joins Wensleydale at a point east of Middleham where the two rivers become the Ure.

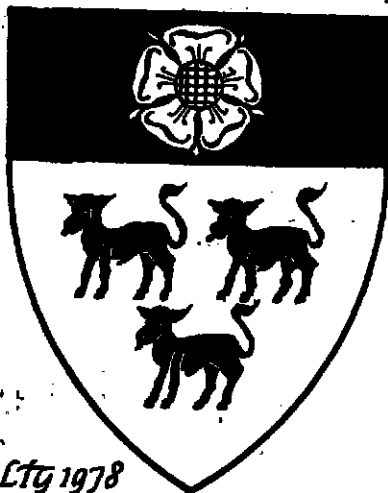
The account of the site's history in the appropriate *Victoria County History*<sup>2</sup> is more secular and architectural than religious, and pictures the arms, which are blazoned in Burke.<sup>3</sup> These could hardly be more simple: Gold with a blue indented chief. It is good to see the *V.C.H.* illustration boldly drawn with a large chief and not more than three points.

The METCALFS of NAPPA HALL lived there for centuries, the last in 1756.<sup>4</sup> The first we hear of, known to Richard, was a James who had been a captain at Agincourt. Two of his sons were loyal adherents of Richard, both before and after his succession. Miles had been a member of Richard's



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#### METCALF OF NAPPAHALL

Council of the North and perhaps before then, Recorder of York (which he continued to be until his death).<sup>5</sup> At the Coronation, he became one of the Judges of the County Palatine of Lancaster; his brother Thomas was appointed Chancellor of the Duchy.<sup>6</sup> Miles retained his Recordership even after Bosworth, and Kendall tells the droll story of how Henry VII failed to get rid of him.<sup>7</sup>

Burke<sup>8</sup> credits Thomas the Chancellor with arms of Silver with three black calves passant, but gives variations and even quarterings for descendants. Franklyn gives yet another variant which is admirable: a chief of black with the white rose of York!<sup>9</sup> Although this is almost certainly post-Ricardian, the temptation is too great and it is drawn here: the calves have become statant.

NAPPA HALL, a mile or so east of Askrigg, is described as 'now a farmhouse, but formerly the home of the principal branch of the still prolific family . . . a good example of the fortified manor-house type'.<sup>10</sup>

#### NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. J. H. Morris, *The North Riding of Yorkshire*, London (1931), pp.120-123.
2. *Victoria County History, North Riding of Yorkshire*, London, Vol. 1 (1914), pp.218-220.
3. Bernard Burke, *The General Armory*, London (1884), p.236.
4. O. Harland, *Yorkshire, North Riding*, London (1951), p.240.
5. P. M. Kendall, *Richard the Third*, London (1955), pp.46, 129, 135.
6. C. R. Markham, *Richard III: his Life and Character*, London (1906), p.83, note 2.
7. P. M. Kendall, *op. cit.*, p.385.
8. B. Burke, *op. cit.*, p.681.
9. Julian Franklyn, *Shield and Crest*, London (1960), p.423, blazon 139.
10. J. H. Morris, *op. cit.*, p.54.