

Research Notes and Queries

ANNE F. SUTTON

Thoughts on History and Mathematics

Mrs. Elizabeth Watson has sent the following:

It is probably a platitude to say that most academic disciplines are similar; but I have found that some are more similar than others. We hear much of Mathematics and Music; English and History are thought a suitable combination for study in schools; but what of History and Mathematics?

'The historian's growing purpose has been to see things as they really were' (J. H. Plumb, *The Death of the Past*, Pelican Books 1973, p.13).

'There are many highly respectable motives which may lead men to prosecute research . . . The first (without which the rest must come to nothing) is intellectual curiosity, desire to know the truth' (G. H. Hardy, *A Mathematician's Apology*, Cambridge 1967, p.79).

One sentence was written by an historian and the others by a mathematician, both writing on their approach to the subject, rather than on the subject itself. Curiosity (it has more august names) is a quality needed by both devotees, and it is a curiosity which persists in searching for facts with the eye of experience and the occasional piece of luck.

Then comes the creative work of clothing the facts with theory.

'New shapes and patterns gradually emerged. The disjointed procession of kings and statesmen spaced along the years assumed in perspective interesting formations. They were linked in chains of progress or movement' (C. V. Wedgwood, *Velvet Studies*, Jonathan Cape, London 1946, p.9).

'The theory finds the justification for its existence in the fact that it correlates a large number of single observations, and it is just here that the "truth" of the theory lies' (Albert Einstein, *Relativity*, Methuen University Paperbacks 1960, pp.123-4.).

But both historians and mathematicians must beware; an additional fact can modify or overturn a theory.

'Yet alongside these moments of dazzling and fearful imagination, there were the agitated sortings and classifyings of a painfully industrious mind' (C. V. Wedgwood *op. cit.*, p.9).

'Most of the finest products of an applied mathematician's fancy must be rejected, as soon as they have been created, for the brutal but sufficient reason that they do not fit the facts' (G. H. Hardy *op. cit.*, p.135).

So both historian and mathematician have a cast of mind which includes intellectual curiosity, a rigorous attention to detail and a craving that only the truth will satisfy. There is no 'counsel of despair' in pursuing this truth. These are now august words indeed.

For words come next. The theory is not hugged; it is broadcast and tested against opinions and possibly against more facts. Here both historian and mathematician require clarity of expression, a statement of what is fact and what is inference, and an invitation to further thought.

Further thought is necessary. History and mathematics provide the first steps on which societies are based. Society does, however unintentionally, make use of the theories to construct governments and environments which affect the human condition. But for advice in that area, at least, we can turn to Sir Thomas More and the humanists.

The Sheriff Hutton Tomb

Mrs. Pauline Routh has sent the following note:

I read Dr. Juby's observations in the last *Ricardian* on the Sheriff Hutton heraldry with interest, and as a result, would like to make one or two of my own. I will not take issue on the unlikelihood or otherwise of the use of the arms of Richard as Duke of Gloucester and Lord of Glamorgan on his son's tomb, but would draw attention to the fact that those arms as shewn in the illustration cited have the chevron of the Newburgh coat bearing, not ermine spots, but inverted lions' faces *jessant-de-lis* (P. Tudor-Craig, *Richard III*, NPG. Catalogue 1973, illustrations 55 and 56). Dodsworth's blazon makes clear that at Sheriff Hutton the chevron was ermine.

In the interests of clarity and at the risk of appearing repetitive, let me set down the relevant portion of Dodsworth's notes exactly as he wrote them (see photographs in T. B. L. Churchill, *Some Notes on the royal monument in the north chapel of Sheriff Hutton church*, 1934, plates 4, 5, and Routh and Knowles, *The Sheriff Hutton Alabaster: a Reassessment*, 1981, pp.6-7):

[f.210r] midle quyer window

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[f.210v]

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Dr. Juby postulates that as Dodsworth says clearly that in the quarterings of Neville 3 was as 2, and 4 as 1, but omits those indications in the Beauchamp Newburgh blazon, that the latter may have been an impalement rather than a quarterly coat, in which case the description of 'quarterly' would have to be put down to a slip of the pen—Dodsworth intending to write 'impaling'. I think it is

because he was explicit in indicating the quarterings of the Neville coat that we can say that the same indications are implicit in the blazon for Beauchamp/Newburgh so soon afterwards.

Dr. Juby goes on to say that the use of a lower case 'q' in starting the blazon, makes it possible that it was a continuation of the France/England blazon rather than a separate one. This seems inadmissible when it can be seen that Dodsworth commenced the 'middle quyer window' notes with a similar lowercase 'q'. Added to which, there is a considerable gap on the last line of folio 210 *recto* after the royal arms; much more than would have been left blank had the final blazon been a continuation of it.

Dr. Juby is not the first to put forward the theory that one rather than two shields was involved here. In a letter to Philip Kerr, Rouge Croix Pursuivant, in 1934, T. B. L. Churchill mooted the possibility that it represented the arms of England impaling the quartered arms of Beauchamp/Newburgh (a copy is in the Society's Library). However, by the time he published his paper 'Some notes on the royal monument in the North Chapel of Sheriff Hutton church', he must have concluded that the theory was untenable, for he did not even mention it.

Obviously the traditional interpretation of Dodsworth, that the coats of arms were all on the tomb, is dying hard.

Book Reviews

HERALDRY AND THE HERALDS. R. O. Dennys, 1982. Jonathan Cape. £12.95.

The traditional output of books about heraldry by members of the College of Arms produces a steady trickle of volumes on what is undoubtedly a subject of considerable interest to historians in general and perhaps to Ricardians in particular. In 1984 the College of Arms will celebrate the quincentenary of its first charter of incorporation and in this new volume Rodney Dennys, Somerset Herald, anticipates some of the questions one might expect to have posed on the eve of such an anniversary, about the role and value of the heralds and the curious survival of a rather intriguing and ancient ceremonial body in the modern world.

The book is divided into three parts beginning with a section entitled 'Some Aspects of Armory'. Much of the early chapters deals with basic heraldry, adding