

A Response to “A ‘Royal’ Sideboard for Chetham’s Library in NL77 pp. 9–12”

Dear Editor,

The Chetham’s Library sideboard

I write with regard to the article published in *Newsletter* 77 about the sideboard at Chetham’s Library, supplied by George Shaw in the 1840s.¹ The article stated that the sideboard incorporated pieces of royal ‘spolia’ in the form of two sets of carved royal achievements of Tudor date. However, the achievements display the unique dragon supporter with its parrot-like beak which Shaw invented. It is found only on Shaw’s numerous fakes and pastiches and does not occur in any English royal heraldry. Indeed, these are not the English royal arms at all; the royal arms, properly depicted, display the arms of England and France quartered, whereas here are the arms of France on one shield and of England on the other, both with Tudor supporters. In heraldic terms this is nonsense, as the College of Arms will confirm. The sideboard’s royal credentials are therefore not ‘beyond doubt’. The arms’ nineteenth-century origins could easily be confirmed by Carbon 14 dating or analysis of the surface finish, either of which would establish that these achievements are coeval with the rest of the sideboard.

Yours faithfully,
Adam Bowett

¹ The article repeats claims made in an earlier article published in 2020–21: Jonathan Foyle and Peter N. Lindfield, ‘A Forger’s Folly? The Productions of George Shaw (1810–76) for Chetham’s Library, Manchester’, *The British Art Journal*, Vol. XXI, No. 3, pp. 42–50.