

PARCHMENT, PRINT AND PAINT: THE DISSEMINATION OF THE CECIL GENEALOGY

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William Cecil's interests in heraldry and genealogy, and his particular concern for the antiquity of his own pedigree, are well known, but it is often presented as a personal hobby. This paper explores the means by which William Cecil used printed heraldic treatises, kings of arms and even domestic decoration to make his private genealogical research public. Rather than using genealogical study as a refuge from the world, Cecil actively used print, the office of arms and architecture to publicise his pedigree far more widely than other new men who sought the legitimacy of antiquity.

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William Cecil's interests in heraldry and genealogy, and his particular concern for the antiquity of his own pedigree, are well known. Stephen Alford calls him 'a keen, if a too creative, genealogist' and A L Rowse notes that 'Drawing up pedigrees was to Lord Burghley what Anglo-Saxon antiquities were to Archbishop Parker – a refuge from the crosses of this world'.¹

In many ways, Cecil reflected the concern for an ancient lineage and the fashion for genealogical research that swept the gentry of the sixteenth century, as great families, both the well-established and the newly elevated, sought to solidify their positions with antiquarian research.² The search for ancient and notable family origins recognised that, while some contemporary theorists argued that virtue was the source of gentility, others (such as the heraldic writer Gerard Legh) continued to claim that an uninterrupted line of gentle descent was necessary for anyone who wished to be viewed as 'a gentleman of auncestrie'.³ William Cecil's personal papers, now held at Hatfield House, are full of pedigrees and

1. Alford 2008, 208; Rowse 1960, 54. Fox-Davies says that Cecil 'was somewhat of a genealogist himself' (1904, 107). Since I am discussing Cecil's family name, I will refer to him as 'Cecil', even after he adopts the title 'Lord Burghley'.
2. For a discussion of these concerns, see Maclagan 1957 and Heal and Holmes 1994, 20–47.
3. Legh 1562, fol 25v. Legh contrasts this form of gentility with 'a gentleman of cote armour, and not of blood. That is to saye, a gentleman of cote armour of the kinge's badge, as the kinge's deuise geuen hym by an herehaughte. This is the second vnperfit cote armour, for if he dye without heyre, his cote is done. But if he haue issue to the thyrd discent, that is a gentleman of blood' (Legh 1562, fols 25v–26r). Legh has borrowed and adapted his taxonomy of gentility from the *Liber Armorum* in *The Booke of Saint Albans* ([Saint Albans Schoolmaster] 1486, sigs. a.6v–b.2r). For theorists who stress virtue as the origins of gentility, see Heal and Holmes 1994, 31–3, and Keen 2002, 101–41.

genealogies, many either written or annotated with Cecil's distinctive hand. These documents, some of which trace his ancestry back as many as sixteen generations, range in quality from rough notes to a beautiful pedigree roll. Cecil's antiquarian interests were widely known in his own day, and Oswald Barron suggests that early heraldic writers like Legh or John Bossewell might include the details of Cecil's pedigree 'in high hopes of catching the patron's eye'.⁴ Barron thus imagines heraldic writers in control of their works, while Cecil passively consumed their books as he pursued (or took refuge in) his private pastime. Cecil, however, was an active promoter of his pedigree and he worked to make his ancestry known. To achieve this end, his private papers were made available to authors and publishers so that his genealogy could reach as wide an audience as possible.

The first episode of the Cecil family history to move from private papers to public record tells a fictitious story in which John Sitsilt defends his claim to his ancestral arms against William Fakneham at the battle of Halidon Hill in 1333.⁵ This story enters the second edition of Legh's *Accedens of Armory* in a rushed, haphazard manner,⁶ but later interventions were more deliberate and included more elaborate genealogies. The Sitsilt story affirmed the antiquity of Cecil's family and arms and thus solidified his position among gentlemen. Cecil's desire to place the story in print highlights the fact that an imagined genealogy was only useful if it was known. A typical family might display its coat of arms in architecture or glass, sometimes altering medieval monuments to do so. Genealogical rolls might also be commissioned to convert family lore into displayable text.⁷ Such manipulations of the past, by their physical nature, were often localised, being limited to an ancestral chapel, the family house or even a private chamber. The limited audience for such displays might have been sufficient for a provincial gentleman, but William Cecil's position provided him with a wide variety of means to ensure his ancient lineage was known throughout England. Cecil's repeated attempts to promulgate the story of his own ancestry show that Barron's characterisation of printers and heraldic writers trying to catch Cecil's eye is completely backward. Rather than using genealogical study as a refuge from the world, Cecil appears to have viewed his research as another avenue by which he might advance his position in Elizabethan society, and he sought out printers, officers of arms and craftsmen to publicise his arms and pedigree. Cecil's prominence, and the survival of his personal papers, provides a rare opportunity to trace the ways that spurious genealogies could be moved from the private study to the public record.

William Cecil (1520–98) was from a relatively humble background but became one of the most powerful men in Elizabethan England. After an education at Cambridge and Gray's Inn, Cecil first joined the service of the Duke of Somerset and then that of the Duke of Northumberland. He carefully navigated his own path through the successions of Lady Jane Gray and Queen Mary before being named Secretary of State by Elizabeth (1558). In February 1571 he was elevated to the title Lord Burghley and in 1572 he was named Lord High Treasurer. Cecil's influence over all aspects of Elizabethan government was immense.

4. Barron 1916, 79.

5. Hatfield House, Cecil Papers, vol 224. Hereafter, the Cecil Papers at Hatfield House will be referred to as 'CP'.

6. Legh 1568, 49r–49v.

7. For several extreme examples, see Heal and Holmes 1994, 34–5.

There is little documentary support for any account of William Cecil's ancestors beyond his grandfather.⁸ Cecil made several different claims to antiquity,⁹ but he settled on a story of Welsh origins in the 1560s when he developed a friendship with Edward Stradling of St Donat's castle in Glamorgan. Stradling's own historical research was well known, and his library was 'the envy and quarry of many a gentleman and antiquarian in England'.¹⁰ In the 1560s Stradling and Cecil shared correspondence about their pedigrees and Stradling's heroic tale of 'The Winning of the Lordship of Glamorgan out of the Welshmen's hands'.¹¹ Eventually, the Cecil genealogy would associate his family with Stradling's narrative, but the first public reference to Cecil's Welsh ancestors does not actually mention Cecil by name and only tells the story of the defence of the Sitsilt arms at the battle of Halidon Hill.

The dramatic story, in which John Sitsilt defends his ancestral arms and they are eventually confirmed by Edward III, first appears publicly 1568, in the second edition of Gerard Legh's *Accedens of Armory*. The *Accedens* was first published in 1562, but the earlier edition does not mention either Cecil or his ancestors. This is actually rather odd, since despite his relatively humble position as a London draper, Legh's heraldic interests and his association with the Inner Temple put him in close contact with some of the most powerful men of Elizabethan England. Legh knew Cecil personally and they shared an interest in coats of arms, as is clear from Legh's will:

Item, I gyve vnto my cossen Sir Wyllyam Cecell one Boke of all the Armes of sutchē knightes as weare made by that worthyē kynge Edwarde the Fyrste of Englande syns the conquest, the whytche boke he borrowed of me, as apareth by hys letter.¹²

Unfortunately, Cecil's letter does not survive, but the book Legh mentions may have been a copy of the Falkirk Roll, the *incipit* of which echoes Legh's description: 'Ceux sount lez grauntz seigneurs a banniere quelx le Roy Edward le premier puis le Conquest avoit par devers Escoce.'¹³

The *Accedens* is in the form of a colloquy between characters named Gerard (a herald and teacher) and Legh (a student). In the first edition, as part of a discussion on the terms

8. In an oddly deferential chapter on Cecil's genealogy, A C Fox-Davies notes that there are many pedigrees dating from Cecil's lifetime, and that they 'all attribute to the Cecil family a descent from Sitselt, or Sitsell'. He notes that 'Those pedigrees have never been disproved', but admits that 'the descent is not now capable of proof, and when a family suddenly rises to high position from comparatively humbler beginnings, and subsequently puts forward an elaborate pedigree, the tendency is always to disbelieve' (Fox-Davies 1904, 109). Fox-Davies does provide some evidence for the truth that may lie behind the Cecil claims (1904, 109–24).

9. An early critic noted that Cecil was eager to prove 'his gentrie, affirming that his howse . . . doe come of the *auuncient howse of the Sitsiltes of Wales*', but he also noted that 'many yet remember when M. Cecil for diuers yeares after his comming to credit, went about to deriue his name of Cecil, from Cecilius the Romaine name' (Parson 1592, 38).

10. Griffiths 1966, 154.

11. *Ibid.* The text survives in Cardiff Central Library MS 4.943 and BL, Harley MS 6108. Wrest Park MS 16 also contained correspondence between Cecil and Stradling, including an account of the winning of Glamorgan. The current whereabouts of the manuscript is unknown (for a list of contents, see Anon 1871, 6). The text was printed as part of David Powell's *Historie of Cambria* (1584), on which more below.

12. Legh's will is transcribed in Nichols 1863, 115.

13. Wagner 1950, 27. Wagner notes that Cecil owned a copy of the Falkirk Roll (1950, 139). The manuscript, then owned by Wagner but originally Wrest Park MS 16, was itself a copy made by Robert Glover and was bound with the Stradling correspondence noted above (n 11).

for multiple lions, the teacher tests his student by asking him to blazon a complex coat of arms:

[Gerard]: In some cotes, there be many lions, wherunto apperteineth a rule. If there be mo then one of them in one scocheon, they shall ende in this worde ‘-seux’; that is to saye, ‘lyonseux’ and ‘heronseux.’ And nowe that you haue well learned, I will appose you whether you can tell me this cote [fig 1].



Fig 1. Sample arms in Legh 1562, fol 85r. Author’s copy.

Legh: I will.

Gerard: Say on.

Legh: He beareth of ten clossetts, Argent & Azure, vpon fiue escocheons Sable lionseux rampand Argent.

Gerard: You haue done but pretely well, for this is the proper blazonne: He beareth x barrulettes, Argent and Azure, on v. escochons Sable lions rampand of þe first, ii, ii, and, i. You shal vnderstand, theis are no ‘lionseux’, because they stande on sondry escocheons, but if the scocheons were not there, they not being parted with any of the ix honorable ordenaries, then sholde they be lionseux. A cote borne in this sort is called a quadrate royall.¹⁴

Legh often uses the arms of his contemporaries as examples, presumably to flatter his friends and associates, and it might be argued that Legh intends to allude to Cecil. The arms

14. Legh 1562, fols 85r–85v. Fox-Davies quotes the passage in full (1904, 108).

here, both blazoned and in trick in the woodcut, are a slight variant of those attributed to Sitsilt in a sixteenth-century addition to the Ashmolean Roll, where they differ slightly by having six escutcheons and lions: ‘Monseur de Sitsilt barre de diz peces argent & asur vi escocheons argent de tant diz lyons sable.’¹⁵ The Sitsilt arms, however, are the fourth in a list of twenty-four arms that have been added to the roll and it is quite likely that these additions were made after the arms had already become associated with Cecil.¹⁶ Robert Glover copied the Ashmolean Roll in about 1575 and did not include the twenty-four-name addendum, the *Dictionary of British Arms* lists no other medieval reference to the Sitsilt arms, and I know of no reference to the arms that can be dated before they appear in Legh’s first edition.¹⁷ The complex arms, which are more typical of sixteenth-century design than fourteenth, may have been invented by Legh simply to illustrate his point about the blazon of lions that ‘stande on sondry escocheons’ and to provide a good test-case for Gerard’s trick question. It is likely, in other words, that the arms were not associated with Cecil at all in 1562 and that they were adapted and adopted by Cecil after he saw them in Legh’s book.

Legh died in 1563, shortly after the publication of the first edition of his book. The *Accedens*, however, was reprinted three more times by Richard Tottell, then twice more by other printers.¹⁸ There are numerous variations, both large and small, throughout subsequent editions, but the changes to the passage describing lions set in individual escutcheons are of particular importance to William Cecil and the dissemination of his narrative of ancient ancestry. The second edition of the *Accedens*, printed in 1568, eliminates the discussion of multiple lions and the invented test in blazon. Instead, this edition simply includes a revised woodcut and blazon before it offers a new passage that describes a supposed dispute over the arms. In place of what is quoted above, the 1568 edition (and all subsequent editions) reads (fig 2):

[Gerard]: He bereth of tenne baruley, Argent & Azure, charged with six escocheons sables, thereon as many lions of the first rampand langued Geuls.

This cote I haue sett out to th’entent to shew you howe the same was blased in the seuenth yeare of the reigne of King Edwarde the Third, in whiche time there was a challenge in the field of Mount Holliton betwene Iohn Sitsilt, knight, & William de Faknaham for the bearing of the same armes. And for that the king woulde haue iustice don in that case without sheading of blood, he appointed two iudges to haue

15. Bodleian, MS Ashmole Rolls 4, membrane 6r (aka Ashmole 15A); see also Woodcock and Flower 2009, 285. As we shall see below, the variant of five escutcheons is part of the Cecil pedigree tradition.
16. Bodleian, MS Ashmole Rolls 4 (c 1334) originally listed 489 names and blazons of arms. The list of 24 additional names and blazons begins with the spurious arms of Augustine Styward, which leads Wagner to speculate that Styward (who also owned the 1575 Styward’s Roll) was an early owner (Wagner 1950, 57).
17. Glover’s copy is now Queen’s College, Oxford, MS 158; the other early copy of the text (a late-16th century manuscript made by Richard Scarlet: College of Arms, Vincent MS 164, fols 119v–134r) also omits the added names (Wagner 1950, 57–8). The novelty of Cecil’s arms was noted at the time. Parsons complains that ‘for diuers yeares he tooke himself farr different armes from’ those attributed to the Sitsilts and wonders if the arms with six lions were adopted ‘to terrifie the world perhaps withal, and to liken himself thereby to Princes, that commonly haue Lyons in their armes, where as a good fatt capon, or a rosted pigg seemeth a fitter cognisaunce for an Inneholders grandchild’ (Parsons 1592, 40). Woodcock and Flower 2009, 285.
18. Tottell’s editions appeared in 1568, 1576 and 1591. It was printed by Henry Ballard in 1597 and John Jaggard in 1612.



Fig 2. Sitsilt arms in Legh 1568, fol 49r. Author's copy.

the only hearing and determininge of the saide matter, whose names were Edward de Beaulile and Iohn de Mowbrey. Before whome the right was duely tried, not onlye by sundry witnesses but also by auncient matter of record, that the said armes did belonge vnto Iohn de Sittsilt, knight, as to him of auncient tyme lyneally descended. And therfore the said William Faknaham was expressly forbidden the bearing of the said armes, vpon paine of forfeiting his sharpe sword & gylte spurres. Whiche determinacion is to be seene, with these armes depicted in the margin in this maner of auncient shield, & blazed in the same order as is aforesaid.¹⁹

This remarkable story is anachronistic fiction. The hereditary and proprietary nature of arms developed over the fourteenth century and the first recorded dispute over arms was argued at the siege of Calais sometime between 1345 and 1348.²⁰ Pushing such cases into the 1330s would predate any other dispute by a generation. More immediately, however, the story establishes John Sitsilt as an illustrious and chivalric figure whose defence of his family's honour was recognised by no less august a figure than King Edward III. Sitsilt's heirs (and we will see that Cecil claimed to be such an heir) would share in this chivalric honour.

The precise means by which this story was inserted into *The Accedens of Armory* is unclear, but it seems likely that Cecil himself had a hand in influencing the printer

19. Legh 1568, fols 49r–49v.

20. Evidence of the dispute survives in a similar case argued between descendants of the disputants, Thomas, Lord Morley, and John, Lord Lovel, who used the case as part of their own arguments in 1386 and 1391. For details of the cases, see Wagner 1960, 21–4. Fox-Davies, who attributed the passage to Legh, outlined anachronisms in the passage and concluded that 'the story looks like an invention of a later period' (1904, 107). He does not cite the text, but his spelling indicates that he used a 1576 edition of *The Accedens* (Fox-Davies 1904, 106–7).

Richard Tottell.²¹ The evidence from the physical book indicates that the decision to add the Sitsilt passage was made late in production. Immediately following this altered passage, the *Accedens* describes the arms of a herald named ‘Callis’ (‘Cailis’ in the 1568 edition) and the arms of Richard Argall. As Godfrey notes,

No reference to a ‘herald’ of this name has been found, nor is there any Calais pursuivant known to have borne [the arms illustrated], but Gerard Legh’s mother was Isabel Cailis and these arms were in St Dunstan’s in the West on the brass to Gerard’s father, Henry Legh (d. 1568). Is it possible that the surname comes from an ancestor who was Calais pursuivant?²²

Richard Argall was Legh’s friend and wrote the dedicatory epistle to the volume.²³ Apart from naming the bearer of the arms, there is nothing odd about these passages in the first edition, but beginning with the 1568 edition, and in the next three editions, the text beside the arms of ‘Cailis’ is set in smaller type. Nichols noted the typographical oddity and suggested that Legh, while discussing family members and friends, had the passage set more densely, either ‘from mock-modesty, or possibly to attract attention’.²⁴ Such a reading is untenable, however, as Legh had died five years earlier. The change in font size is a typographical decision, unaffected by authorial intent. In fact, it was the addition of the Sitsilt passage that necessitated the smaller type in the Cailis and Argall passages.

The smaller type of the 1568 edition is found on the verso of the final leaf in a quire (sig. G.8v, fol 49v; see fig 3). The typical page of the 1568 edition contains thirty-two lines of text, but, because of the smaller type, folio 49v contains thirty-six lines of text, or four additional lines. Folio 49r, which contains the Sitsilt addition, has been set to include thirty-three lines, or one more line than normal. Folio 49 (recto and verso) therefore has five extra lines in total. In addition, the fifteen lines of smaller type allow for more characters per line than is typical of the volume. The space created by these five extra lines of text has been filled with the expanded Sitsilt story, which is fifty-three words longer than the text it replaced. Or, to put that another way, the expanded Sitsilt story has forced the compositor to create space for fifty-three additional words of text. That this space was created on the last leaf of a quire implies that this solution was necessary because the text of the following quire (ie quire H) had already been set in form. Spreading the extra lines across several leaves simply by adding one line to several pages (as was done on 49r) might have looked better, but would have caused additional work in the shop; at least five folios (49r to 51r) would have needed to be reset. The existing solution, haphazard as it is, requires the least amount of resetting of type. Even so, mistakes were made: the folio is numbered ‘58’ rather than ‘49’, perhaps indicating haste. The three subsequent editions, which are all set from their immediate predecessor, copy the typography line-for-line and thus reproduce the smaller type. Only in the sixth and final edition of 1612, which is reset from scratch, does the change in font size disappear.

I propose that this last-minute change, made while the second edition was in an advanced state of completion at the press, results from the influence of William Cecil

21. I will refer to the second edition as the work of ‘Tottell’, but it is of course possible that someone else in the print shop was directly responsible for the changes made.

22. Godfrey 1963, 314; see also 242–3.

23. See Nichols 1863, 108. Nichols provides some useful biographical information concerning Argall (1863, 108–9).

24. Ibid, 108. See also London 1955.



Fig 3. Typographical changes in Legh 1568, fol 49v. Author's copy.

himself. Cecil obviously stood to gain from a story that promoted his ancestral honour, especially in 1568, two years before he was elevated to the title Lord Burghley. Cecil was also associated with Legh: recall that he would have come into ownership of the book of arms he had borrowed from Legh after the death of the author. Beyond that book, Cecil's interest in heraldry and genealogy is specifically intertwined with Legh; he owned a copy of Richard Strangeways's manuscript, which was itself used extensively by Legh as a source.²⁵ Cecil also owned a manuscript copy of Legh's *Accedens*; although it is transcribed

25. CP vol 295/1 is a 1464/65 copy of the Strangeways manuscript, BL, Harley MS 2259. Legh used the text extensively, but appears to have worked from BL, Harley MS 2259. Cecil himself has left sparse annotations throughout CP vol 295/1 (see fols 37r and possibly 45v).

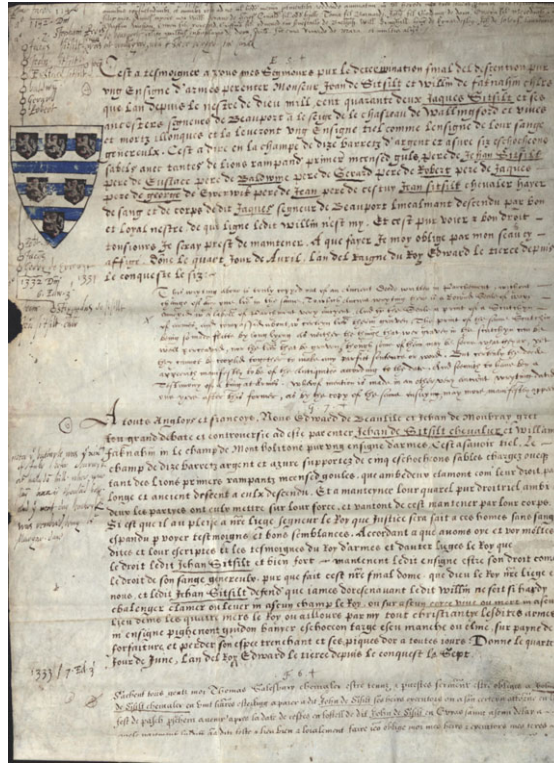


Fig 4. Records of a challenge of arms, CP vol 218/3, fol 1r. Reproduced with permission of the Marquess of Salisbury, Hatfield House.

from either the 1591 or 1597 edition,²⁶ it does show Cecil's interest in the work. Most significantly, however, Cecil owned and annotated copies of the Sitsilt text that was used as a source in the Tottell print shop. The somewhat obscure citation at the end of the *Accedens* passage provides a clue about its origins: 'Whiche determination is to be seene, with these armes depicted in the margent in this maner of auncient shield, & blazed in the same order as is aforesaid.' This passage refers to a document currently among the Cecil Papers in Hatfield House.²⁷ Now two leaves of parchment, but at some point a short roll of at least three membranes, the document contains several different texts related to the Sitsilts in the time of Edward III. The verso (or dorse) is blank apart from some mathematical calculations (on which more later), a genealogical sketch of the Sitsilts by Cecil himself and the caption 'The Copy of two auncient wrytyngs made in þe 6 and 7 yeres of Kyng Edward 3', also probably by Cecil.²⁸ The position of this caption, framed by a typical set of creases, indicates that what is now the first leaf was folded before it was integrated into a roll. The recto of the first leaf is dominated by the two texts mentioned in the caption (fig 4). They

26. The manuscript (CP vol 295/2) is a copy of large sections of Legh's text. It agrees with textual variants found in the later editions of the work, but it does not agree with the radical variants in the 1612 text.

27. The document is part of CP vol 218/3.

28. CP vol 218/3, fol iv. The page was originally folded and endorsed with this caption.

are visually centred on the leaf and written in larger characters than the other texts. In the upper left-hand margin, as the *Accedens* promised, can be seen the Cecil/Sitsilt coat of arms, drawn on an ancient shield similar in shape to that in the *Accedens* woodcut of 1568. Above and below the shield Cecil has sketched a rough pedigree of the Sitsilts (with details taken from the first text). At the top and bottom of the leaf, in a smaller hand, are fragments of Latin and French texts that discuss financial relationships between ‘John de Sitsilt, cheualer’ and various other figures. These, which continue onto the second leaf, give the whole a sense of having once been part of a larger collection. The second leaf also contains several short charters and deeds, one of which is fitted between texts that were written earlier, and a pedigree of the Baldwin family showing their relationship to the Sitsilts. This second leaf was never folded, but has the creases typical of a roll.

The two French texts that dominate the first folio describe the dispute of arms at Halidon Hill. The first text, with the *incipit* ‘*Cest a tesmoigner*’, describes itself as ‘*le determination final*’ in a dispute between John Sitsilt and William Fakneham. The determination rests on the fact that in 1142 James Sitsilt was killed at the castle of Wallingford while bearing the arms in question (‘*Cest a dire, en la champe de dize barretz d’argent et asure, siz eschocheons Sabels, auec tantes de lions rampand primer incensed guls*’). The text then lists a direct line of descent through ten generations from the ‘Jaques’ (ie James) at Wallingford to the ‘Jean’ at Halidon Hill. There is no authorial name attached to the document, but it would seem to be a statement produced by an authority on heraldic practice, possibly a king of arms.

The second text, with the *incipit* ‘*A tous Angloys*’, claims to be a formal decision written by Edward de Beaulile and John de Mowbray. This introduces the debate over arms (here said to have ‘*cing eschocheons Sables*’) and places the event clearly at Halidon Hill. The disputants, it claims, were about to put their bodies at risk in defence of their claims, but the king intervened and demanded that a decision be reached peaceably. Texts were sought after, as was ‘*les tesmoignes du roy d’armes et dauter lieges le roy*’ (the testimonies of the king of arms and other servants of the king), and it was decided that John Sitsilt should continue to bear the arms and that William Fakneham must cease to bear them or face dishonour. The texts are dated, as the caption stated, the sixth and seventh years of the reign of Edward III.

Between these two texts, written in a different hand, is a brief account in English of the provenance of the documents, claiming that they are ‘truly copyed out of an ancient deede written in parchment, without change of any one *lettre* in the same’. The note claims that a round seal was attached to ‘*Cest a tesmoigner*’, but it was pressed flat and hence unreadable. Despite this loss, ‘certainly the deede appeerith manifestly to be of the antiquitee according to the date. And seemith to haue ben a testimony of a king at armes’.²⁹

As with Tottell’s account of this dispute in the 1568 *Accedens*, the anachronism of this testimonial is obvious. Kings of arms did not participate in disputes over *cote armure* before the fifteenth century, and the French of the passages shows no signs of having been copied from an Anglo-Norman original. It is, rather, the largely case-free French of the mid-sixteenth century.

The document is undated. The mathematical notes on the dorse of the first leaf seem to calculate the time since the events being described (ie the reign of Stephen and the battle of Halidon Hill; both dates are in Cecil’s notes in the margin):

29. CP vol 218/3, fol 1r. A complete transcription of all three parts of this text is included as an appendix in the supplementary material.

1570	1570
<u>1142</u>	<u>1332</u>
0428	0238

There is, however, no indication that these calculations were completed when the document was made. Given that 1570 is a significant date for Cecil – in January of this year (by contemporary dating) he was elevated to the title Lord Burghley – these calculations may have been added to the document to show the time it took the family to attain nobility after gaining and defending their arms. It is, of course, possible that the simple equations were performed when the document was created. If that were the case, the document would be a copy of an earlier text originally used by Tottell as he revised Legh's *Accedens* in 1568. Given the patch-work nature of the leaves – the multiple hands, the different patterns of creases on different leaves, the obvious attempts to fit additional texts around existing texts – it is more likely, however, that the document is the first copy of this particular assortment of texts, and thus the original source document for the Sitsilt story in the 1568 edition of Legh's *Accedens*.³⁰

Indeed, the English text in the *Accedens* summarises much of '*A touts Angloys*', the second text in Cecil's collection. The parallels are often so close as to be translations. Both texts claim that there 'there was a challenge in the field of Mount Holliton betwene Iohn Sitsilt, knight, & William de Faknaham' or a '*grand debate & controuersie ad esté par enter Iehan de Sitsilt cheualier, et Willam Faknaham, in le champ de Mont hollitone*'; both assert 'that the king woulde haue iustice don in that case without sheading of blood' or '*que il au pleise a nostre liege seigneur le Roy que Iustice sera fait a ces homes sans sange expandu*'. The names of the judges are given, although at different points in the narrative – the English in the middle, the French at the beginning – but in both instances it is decided 'that the said armes did belonge vnto Iohn de Sittsilt, knight, as to him of auncient tyme lyneally descended' or '*que le droit le dit Iehan Sitsilt et bien fort maintenant le dit ensigne estre son droit, come le droit de son sange genereulx*'. The French has a more detailed account of the restrictions placed upon William Fakneham, but both agree that he 'was expressely forbidden the bearing of the said armes, vpon paine of forfeiting his sharpe sword & gilte spurres' or '*sur payne de forfaiture, & perdre son espée trenchant, & ses piques dor*'.³¹

Despite the English note claiming that these documents are copies of older, authentic records with conveniently obscure yet authoritative seals, there are no earlier records to support the story. We can, however, reconstruct its first appearance in print. In 1562 Gerard Legh completed *The Accedens of Armory*, for which he invented an elaborate coat of arms to illustrate the use of the suffix '-seux' when blazoning multiple lions. Legh died shortly thereafter, but his printer, Richard Tottell, began the production of a second edition in 1568. Cecil, having seen the arms in Legh's book, approached Tottell late in production with a document that outlined his ancient claim to the arms (now with six escutcheons) and their recognition by Edward III. Tottell, not surprisingly, agreed with

30. It appears that in 1568 the leaf contained only the three texts discussed above, and that it was added to and converted into a roll in the years following. This speculation, however, cannot be proven definitively.

31. Note that '*A touts Angloys*' also includes the variant arms in the first edition of the *Accedens*; the arms include '*cinq eschocheons Sables*' rather than the '*siz eschocheons Sabels*' found in the first text (and indeed in all subsequent references to the Cecil arms).

Cecil, and made the last-minute alterations to his woodcuts and text to please the queen's councillor. Given the limitations of space, Cecil's document was translated and edited to require as little additional work as possible in the composing room, but that work did leave a trace in the typographical oddities of the folio on which it was printed.

Cecil's interest in promoting the story of his arms and their defence did not end there. Four years later, in 1572, Richard Tottell was again producing a heraldic treatise, this one by John Bossewell. Bossewell's *Workes of Armorie*, like Legh's *Accedens*, is a large treatise on heraldic practice that combines technical details on blazon with discussions of chivalry and nobility. Bossewell knew Legh's *Accedens* well; he borrows from it often and cites it favourably. Also a product of Tottell's shop, Bossewell's book is illustrated with several woodcuts that were originally used in Legh's text. After briefly outlining a conflict of arms between John Chandos and the Lord of Claremont at Poitiers, Bossewell also includes the story of the Sitsilt dispute:

Suche lyke controuersie dyd chaunce, betwene two valiaunt, knyghtes, Sir Iohn of Sitsilt, and Sir Willyam of Facknaham, for raysinge in fielde the cote armoure, here after the antique maner displayed. But the ryghte of the bearing thereof (which they were readie to trie by force of armes) was adiudged to Sir Iohn Sitsilt, as to him moste ryghtefully and lyneally descended by good & lawfull byrthe, as heyre of bloode and of bodie of Iames Sitsilt, Lorde of Beauporte. For the truthe whereof (gentle reader) here ensueth *verbatim* the cople of the very originall wrytinges, *in hæc verba*:³²

This is followed by a full-page woodcut of James Sitsilt (who died at Wallingford) in mail holding a banner and shield, both of which bear the arms in question. The accompanying blazon cites the 'great knowledge' of ancient officers of arms (fig 5).³³ The promised 'wrytinges' follow on the verso, and they include both '*Cest a tesmoigner*' and '*A tous Angloys*' from the Cecil document described above. There are accidental variations in spelling, but only two substantial variations: in the first text Bossewell blazons the lions as 'incensed Gule' (ie with red tongues), but the Cecil manuscript more correctly blazons them 'incensed Guls'. Bossewell also has a typical typographical error, saying that Fakneham risked losing '*son espeé trenchaut*' rather than '*trenchant*', as in the Cecil manuscript.

Bossewell does not include the lengthy English note describing the provenance of the documents. Instead, he inserts a caption between the two texts, indicating that the second is 'The final determinacion of the controuersie aforesayde'. Cecil's interest in authorising citations is not lost entirely, however. Following the French texts, Bossewell includes his own citation, which echoes much of the language from the Cecil manuscript:

The whych sayde originall wrytinges, beyng written in parchement, accordyng to the antiquitie of the tyme, I my selfe haue seene being in the possession of the ryghte honorable the Lorde of Burghley, to whome in blood the same belongeth, whose

32. Bossewell 1572, fol 79v.

33. Ibid, fol 80r.



Fig 5. Sir James Sitsilt, in Bossewell 1572, fol 80r. Author's copy.

name beinge written at thys daye Cecill is neuertheles in Wales, both in speche and common writing, vsed to be vttered Sitsilt or Sitsild, where the originall house at thys daye remayneth nere Aburgenny.³⁴

Writing four years after the 1568 edition of the *Accedens*, Bossewell has integrated the episode into his text more seamlessly than it entered Legh's book. Bossewell also makes explicit, in a way the *Accedens* did not, that these arms continued to be borne by Cecil, the current lineal descendant of James Sitsilt. Bossewell, who dedicates the *Workes* to Cecil, is thus able to flatter his patron by including not only the arms, but the narrative of their defence. But Bossewell also makes clear that Cecil's patronage included providing the documents from which the story was copied. In 1572, Cecil (now Lord Burghley) was once again able to ensure that Tottell's print shop helped disseminate the story of his ancient claim to arms. As both works were reprinted (Legh's *Accedens* in 1576, 1591, 1597 and 1612; Bossewell's *Workes* in 1597), this story reached an ever wider audience.

Richard Tottell's print shop provided a public venue through which Cecil was able to reproduce and disseminate his private manuscripts. He also reproduced and disseminated the texts in his own home. The texts in CP vol 218/3 reappear in a more formal collection, CP vol 266. This collection of texts, all but one in the same hand, argues for the antiquity of

34. *Ibid.*, fol 81r.

the Cecil family. The collection opens with a genealogy in English that begins in the reign of William Rufus:

In the yere of Christ 1091 Robert Sitsilt came with Robert Fitz Hamond to the conquest of the countrie of Glamorgan and after wedded a ladye by whome he had Haulterennes and other landes in Herefordshire and Glostershire. He had a sonne called James Sitsilt that was slayne at the siege of Wallingford in the raigne of Kinge Stephen, who as the cronacle of the Abby of Dore saith at the same tyme had on him a vesture whereon was wrought in nedle worke his armes as they be made on the tombe of Gerold Sitsilt in the Abby of Dore. He had a sonne called John Sitsilt and foure daughters.³⁵

The other ancestors who are merely listed in '*Cest a tesmoigner*' also appear in the genealogy, each given brief narrative form. Like other texts in the collection, the English genealogy has an introductory note, possibly in Cecil's hand, declaring that it is 'the true coppie word by word of an old role in parchment which semeth to haue bene written in the end of the raigne of King Edward the 4'.³⁶ A series of French texts follow, filling fols 4–8. These also include headings or captions, one claiming that the collection includes a 'true copie of twoe old charters or euidences written and sealed in parchment' which prove the veracity of the English genealogy, the other claiming to be from sources 'all in parchment'.³⁷ Rather than copies of ancient parchment, most of these French texts are copied from CP vol 218/3, including the deeds, charters and the two texts on the dispute of arms.³⁸ The copies are substantially identical, and even the spelling is remarkably close with only five spelling variations between the two witnesses of '*Cest a tesmoigner*' and '*A touts Angloys*'.

CP vol 266, therefore, seems to be a personal attempt to bring together a wide variety of texts that demonstrate the antiquity and nobility of the Cecil line. In addition to the English genealogy and the French documents from CP vol 218/3, other texts in English, Latin and French are included. Only one of these, a letter in French from William de Clinton, the Earl of Huntington, and Roger, Bishop of Coventry and Lychfield, mentions the dispute of arms at Halidon Hill. Although better organised than CP vol 218/3, the manuscript remains a working document. The margins of all the texts in the manuscript are annotated by Cecil with diagrammatic pedigrees tracing the main and cadet branches of his own family. Dates and summarising notes, also in Cecil's hand, gloss many of the texts, and the headings citing ancient sources are often squeezed into the upper margins. Throughout the 1560s and 1570s, while the story of John Sitsilt's dispute circulated in both Legh's *Accedens* and Bossewell's *Workes*, the full genealogy and

35. CP vol 266, fol 1v.

36. CP vol 266, fol 1v. Fol 3v ends in Cecil's hand, 'Here endeth þe old roole in parchment'. Unlike other such claims, this one may be substantiated; the text seems to be copied from CP vol 209/8, which is indeed a vellum roll. Another copy, possibly in the same hand as CP vol 266, is in CP vol 204/2. Since CP vol 266 contains all of the texts under consideration here, I will quote from it. Note that Nares had access to this text for his *Memoirs* and used it as though it were authoritative. He believed that its pedigree was 'corroborated' by the formal pedigree in CP vol 224 but, as I will argue, it is actually the source for CP vol 224 (see Nares 1828, 1.7–8; Nares includes a facsimile of parts of CP vol 266 following p. 8). Other texts in CP vol 266 are also found elsewhere among the Cecil Papers. The will of Richard Seyclid at the end of the codex, for example, is copied from the original text in CP vol 143/22.

37. CP vol 266, fols 4r, 5v.

38. These texts are found in CP vol 266, fols 5v–6r and 6r–6v. Another text from CP vol 218 comes between the two.

its supporting documentation was largely confined to these documents. Cecil, however, did work to make this more detailed genealogy a matter of public record.

A year after the appearance of the 1568 edition of Legh's *Accedens*, the arms of Sitsilt/Cecil and his genealogy were confirmed during the Visitation of Herefordshire carried out by Robert Cooke, Clarenceux King of Arms.³⁹ More ostentatiously, Cecil also made his arms and genealogy public in the decoration of his house, Theobalds. The house, which no longer stands, included a series of elaborate decorations that celebrated the antiquity and nobility of England. Cecil's own pedigree was used to decorate the walls of the loggia, or covered veranda, that flanked the doors leading to the great garden.⁴⁰ The German traveller Paul Hentzner, who visited the estate at the time of Cecil's funeral, commented on the genealogical decorations,⁴¹ and the antiquarian Richard Gough (1735–1809) drew a sketch of the walls, which is preserved in Nichols's *Progresses and Processions*. Although the sketch has gaps, indicating that some of the text was unreadable in the eighteenth century, the pedigree is clearly copied from the English genealogy in CP vol 266. Nichols attempted to emend the text based on later printed versions of the pedigree, but the original text on the walls of Theobalds can be more convincingly reconstructed using the text of CP vol 266 (quoted above) to fill in the blanks left by Gough and to correct his transcription errors (fig 6):⁴²

[In the yere of Christ 1090 Robert Sitsilt]
 came with Robert Fitz Hamon
 to the conqueste of þe covntrie of Gla
 morgan and after wedded a lady by
 whom he had [Haulterrennes]⁴³ and
 [other]⁴⁴ land on H[ereford]shire and Glo
 str[es]hir[e] He has a son called James
 de Sitsil[t that was slayne at the siege of
 Wallingford in the raigne of kinge Stephen
 who, as the c]ro[nacle of the Abby of
 Dore] [saith, then]⁴⁵ had on him [a vesture
 whereon was wrought in nedle worke his

39. Weaver 1886, 17–18. The genealogy lists Robert's son as 'Adam, son of Robert', but I can find no other record of this name. It seems to be a scribal error for 'James'. See also Wagner 1972, 67.
40. This is among the earliest portions of the house, begun in the mid-1560s (see Sutton 1999, 34–6). The decorations (as drawn by Gough) include the Cecil arms encircled by the garter, so they must date after 1572 when he joined the order.
41. Hentzner does not give many details about the genealogies, but a 1650 parliamentary survey confirms that they included the pedigree of 'the old Lord Burley' (see Sutton 1999, 56, and 2004, 69–70).
42. For Nichols's transcription and facsimile of Gough's sketch, see Nichols 1788, 2.7–8, pl 32 (note that the pagination of appendices at the end of the volume is disordered). The text has been confusingly re-edited in Goldring *et al* 2014, 5.166–170.
43. For 'Haulterrennes', Gough's sketch leaves a blank space, followed by the nonsensical 'diforcines'.
44. For 'other', Gough's sketch has 'all / thea', divided across a line.
45. For 'saith at the same time', Gough's sketch has 'hath' and a short space. Note that there is a great deal of blank space in the second half of the passage, but, apart from this instance, the text of CP vol 266 corresponds with the spacing represented by Gough. The second panel, which appears to outline James Sitsilt's defence of the Empress Maud, has no parallel in the genealogy.

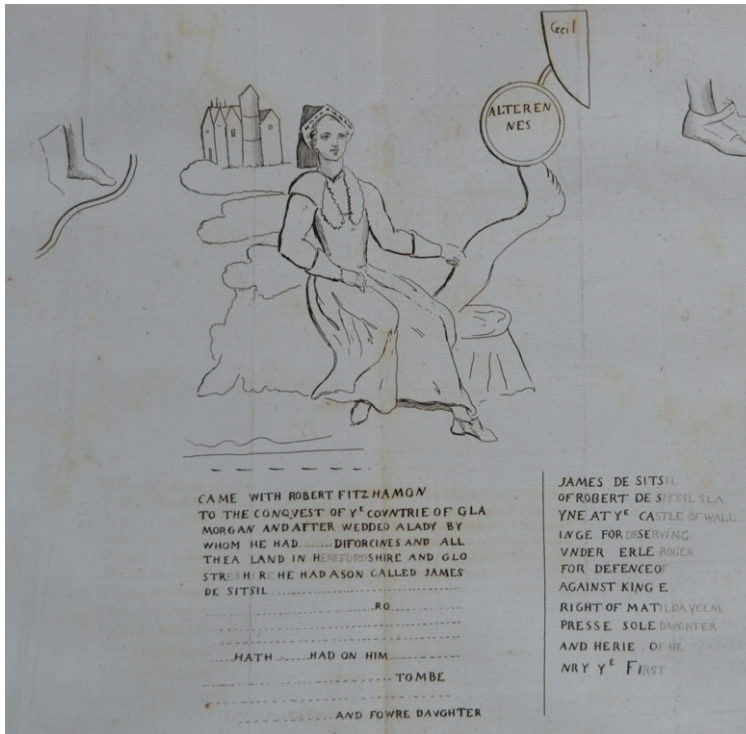


Fig 6. Richard Gough's sketch of Theobalds genealogy in Nichols 1788, 7. Author's copy.

armes as they be made on the] tombe [of
Gerold Sitsilt in the abby of Dore. He had a sonne
called John Sitsilt] and fowre daughter[s].

Sutton, who does not discuss Gough's sketch, notes that such a pedigree in so conspicuous a space trumpeted 'the ancient nobility of the Cecil family'.⁴⁶

Cecil's ancestry was celebrated in other rooms, with one visitor describing a gallery that featured 'portraits of the Cecil family, with an account of the notable acts of each under different reigns'.⁴⁷ Such images may have been in the form of a genealogy, but the incomplete records of the building do not specify. A sketch in the Cecil archive, however, suggests that such ornamentation was at least planned (fig 7). The sketch of decorations for two adjoining walls shows a vine, rooted on the left and growing to the right, turning a corner to a second wall halfway along. Blank shields are hung from the vine, presumably intended to show the changing arms of the Sitsilt/Cecil family. Below the arms, scroll work bears the names of Cecil's ancestors and their wives, beginning with 'Robert de Sitsilt' and ending with 'William Cecil . . . Dominus Burghley' himself. At this point the vine branches to form a second layer with blank shields and lozenges hanging

46. Sutton 1999, 56, and 2004, 70.

47. Brtnicky 1981, 85.

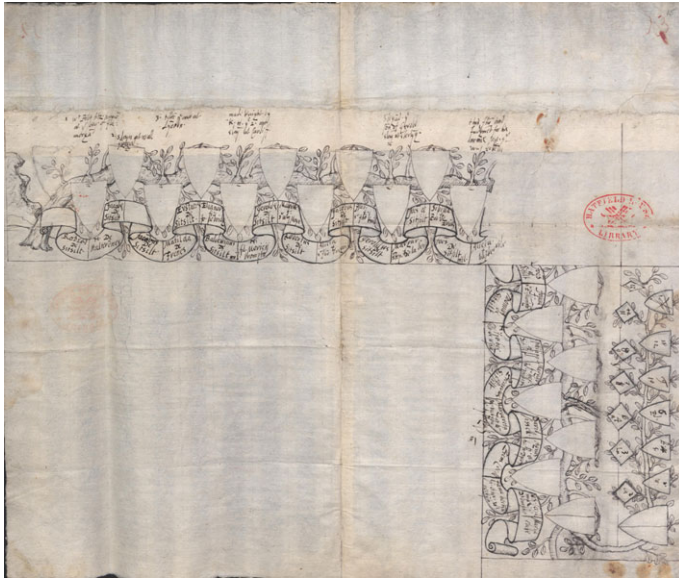


Fig 7. Sketch of Cecil pedigree for decoration, CP vol 143/12, fol 1r. Reproduced with permission of the Marquess of Salisbury, Hatfield House.

from it, presumably to illustrate the arms of Cecil's male and female children.⁴⁸ The names are in several hands, including Cecil's. Cecil has also added notes above the first range of shields, including the note above 'Johanes de Sitsilt, milites' that 'This Johanes had judgment for his armes'.⁴⁹

The culmination of this genealogical programme is a formal pedigree roll of the Cecil family from James Sitsilt to William Cecil, a lavishly illustrated heraldic production. The whole was produced in 1580 by Robert Cooke and Robert Glover (Clarenceux King of Arms and Somerset Herald) who, in a formal epigraph, claim to have examined '*cartas, evidencias cæteraque antiquitatis monumenta*' (charters, evidences and other monuments of antiquity). Similar citations in Latin precede the texts copied from CP vol 266.⁵⁰

48. CP vol 143/12.

49. Ibid. CP vol 143 contains a mixture of documents, most of which are either genealogical notes or sketches for the construction at Theobalds. Several sketches show the Cecil crest used to decorate the house. In one (CP vol 143/47) the first gateway at the approach to the house is decorated with two lions supporting a heraldic garb. Sutton claims that 'atop the "tafrill" [of the gate] heraldic beasts support arms and a crest, and though the sketch remains hazy, the intended heraldic devices must have been the Cecils' (2004, 37). A similar decoration is clearer in the sketch of the inner gallery found in CP vol 143/50. The garb or wheat sheaf, however, was used by Cecil as a crest, not as the whole arms (both are reproduced by Sutton 2004 as figs 2.1 and 2.2). CP vol 143/36 contains an 'estimate of a chymney' in the house with prices 'For the armes with helmet and creast . . . [and] For garnishing about the armes and the other work behynde the pillers' (CP vol 143/36). There are two estimates, one for £106 and another for £93, which indicate the expense of the display. Neither, however, gives any details about the arms themselves.

50. CP vol 224, fol 4r. It is unlikely that either Cooke or Glover are the scribes of the roll, but they have both signed it following the epigraph. Note that Cooke also completed the Cecil genealogy during his 1569 visitation of Herefordshire and granted arms to the University of Cambridge in 1571, when Cecil was Chancellor. The grant is now University of Cambridge UA 1; see 'Grant of

The language is by this point familiar. It is taken from the headings of the various collections of Sitsilt documents that Cecil made available to those he enlisted to help disseminate his genealogy. Pedigree rolls had become common by the mid-sixteenth century as many families sought to promote their claims to noble lineage through heraldic display.⁵¹ As is typical of the genre, the Cecil roll is structured around a central pedigree (the Latin text is based on the English text in CP vol 266) which is surrounded by supporting texts in both French and Latin. All the texts in the Cecil roll have been copied or adapted from the collection in CP vol 266, including both ‘*Cest a tesmoigner*’ and ‘*A tous Angloys*’ which appear at the beginning and end of the texts, framing the entire family narrative.⁵² There is no description of a damaged seal authenticating the documents; instead, the letter of the Earl of Huntingdon and the Bishop of Coventry and Lichfield is included in an elaborate *trompe l’oeil* that illustrates their perfectly preserved seals.⁵³ Bossewell’s *Workes of Armorie* has also been used in the pedigree’s production: the illumination of ‘Iacobvs Sitsilt’ that stands at the head of the pedigree is modelled on the woodcut of the same figure in Bossewell’s works (cf figs 5 and 8). Such portraits of principal founders became fashionable by the end of the century, but Baker speculates that this ‘may have been one of Robert Glover’s inventions’ since its appearance in the Cecil roll is an early example.⁵⁴ Such influence assumes that the roll was viewed by Cecil’s contemporaries, and it is easy to image that it was displayed to the curious, either as a permanent decoration or as an object to be unrolled during private conversation.

It was during just such a conversation with Cecil that Edward Stradling was prompted to write his genealogy-filled story of the twelve knights who accomplished the winning of Glamorgan.⁵⁵ Stradling’s history was eventually printed in 1584 as part of David Powell’s *Historie of Cambria, now called Wales*.⁵⁶ Powell gathered various texts together to augment Caradoc of Llancarvan’s history, and Cecil’s collection was also a major source for his research. After Stradling’s account of the twelve legendary knights, Powell adds that other knights, including Cecil’s ancestor, aided in the conquest,

of whome Robert Sitsylt was one, who albeit he had no part of the said Lordship of Glamorgan (that I can read of) yet neuerthelesse, he was in respect of his good seruice there doone, preferred to the marriage of an inheritrice of great possessions in the land of Ewyas, and the countrie neere adioining. Of which Robert Sitsylt I find

arms to the University of Cambridge’, *University of Cambridge Digital Library*, <<https://cudl.lib.cam.ac.uk/view/MS-UA-ARMS-00001/1>> (accessed 25 Jan 2022). Glover copied the Falkirk Roll from the now-lost manuscript that Legh may have loaned to Cecil (Wagner 1950, 28–29).

51. For a very useful survey of genealogical rolls, see Baker 2014.

52. These appear on membranes 1 and 2, the beginning and end of the pedigree. A Latin summary is also included on the first membrane.

53. The letter is copied from CP vol 266, fol 5v, where the seals are neither mentioned nor illustrated. The depiction of seals in formal pedigrees was common; Robert Cooke, for example, claimed that a seal that proved the authenticity of the Mildmay pedigree crumbled in his hands upon inspection: Baker 2014, 136, 147, 153.

54. *Ibid.*, 137.

55. See Griffiths 1966. Whittle speculates that the conversation may have taken place in a garden, much like that at Theobalds, the bordering loggia of which was decorated with Cecil’s own genealogy (Whittle 1999, 121).

56. Powell 1584, 121–41. On Powell’s use of documents related to Stradling and Cecil, see Griffiths 1966, 155.



Fig 8. James Sitsilt on the Cecil roll (detail), CP vol 224, membrane 1r. Reproduced with permission of the Marquess of Salisbury, Hatfield House.

this that followeth, recorded in a verie ancient writing, containing his whole genealogie of 16 descents of heires male lineallie; which writing for the more credit of the historie, I thought good here to insert, as followeth.⁵⁷

What follows is a close transcription of the English genealogy in CP vol 266. Occasional details have been added from elsewhere in the collection. After copying the genealogy's entry on Baldwin, for example, Powell notes that 'This man gaue certeine lands in the townshipp of Kigestone, vnto the moonkes of Dore', a detail that is taken from a charter included later in CP vol 266.⁵⁸ Other additions highlight the dispute of arms at Halidon Hill. The first entry is a generally close transcription of the Cecil genealogy, beginning 'In the yeare of Christ 1091 Robert Sitsylt came with Robert Fitzhamon'. His son James has been given his own numbered entry, which has been augmented in significant ways:

57. Powell 1584, 141.

58. Ibid, 143, and CP vol 266, fols 2r and 4r.

2. James Sitsylt, tooke part with Mawd the empresse against king Stephen, and was slaine at the siege of the castell of Wallingford, An. 4. Stephan. hauing then vpon him a vesture, whereon was wrought in needle worke his armes or ensignes, as they be made on the toombe of Gerald Sitsylt in the Abbeie of Dore, *which are afterward trulie blazed, in a iudgement giuen by commission of king Edward the third, for the ancient right of the same armes.* This Iames had a sonne called Iames Sitsylt, and foure daughters.

Four additions have been made to the text in CP vol 266: The reference to Maud clarifies the allegiance of James Sitsylt; the date adds specificity, although Cecil's marginal gloss in CP vol 266 claims that he died in 'Stephani anno 5^o'; the doublet 'armes or ensignes' links this passage with the dispute of arms, which typically refers to 'ensignes'; and the specific reference to the blazon of the arms that will be given during the judgement (printed in blackletter) furthers the association between the arms in the reign of Stephen and their defence in the reign of Edward III.⁵⁹ This association is once again made during the genealogy's entry for John Sitsylt, the eleventh descendant in the line. The entry begins by quoting the manuscript genealogy, 'Sir John Sitsylt knight, tooke to wife Alicia . . .'. The Cecil manuscript does not, at this point, mention that this John was involved in the dispute of arms, but Powell adds a note on the dispute, marked with an asterisk and printed in blackletter:

* In the time of the warres that King *Edward* the 3. made against *Scotland*, at a place called *Halydon* hill neere *Barwick* anno 6. *Edward* 3. there arose a great variance and contention betweene Sir *William de Facknaham* knight, on the one side approouant, and this Sir *Iohn Sitsylt* knight, on the other side defendant, for an ensigne of armes, that is to say; *The field of ten barrets siluer and azure, supported of 5. scocheons sable charged with so manie lions of the first rampants incensed geuls*, which ensigne both the parties did claime as their right. But as both the parties put themselues to their force to maintaine their quarell, and vaunted to maintaine the same by their bodies; it pleased the king that iustice should be yeilded for triall of the quarell, without shedding of blood: and so the bearing of the ensigne was solemnlie adiudged to be the right of the said Sir *Iohn Sitsylt*, as heire of blood lineallie descended of the body of *Iames Sitsylt*, Lord of *Beauport* slaine at the siege of *Walingford*, as before is declared. The finall order and determination of which controuersie is laid downe by *Iohn Boswel* gentleman, in his booke intituled *The concords of Armorie*, fol. 80. This Sir *Iohn Sitsylt* had a charge of men at armes, for the custodie of the marches of *Scotland*, in the 11. yeere of King *Edward* the third.⁶⁰

As in the 1568 edition of Legh's *Accedens*, this passage is a close English summary of 'A tous Angloys'. The date has been moved to the beginning of the text and the specific references to 'moltes dites et lour escriptes, et les tesmoignes du Roy d'armes et dauter lieges le Roy' have been replaced with a vague assertion that the dispute 'should be yeilded for

59. Cf this passage with the quotation from CP vol 266 above. Perhaps the numerals should be added to this list of additions. Powell numbers each generation in his genealogy, but only the first three generations are numbered in CP vol 266.

60. Powell 1584, 146.

trial'. The first text in the pair, '*Cest a tesmoigne*', is alluded to as 'The finall order and determination', thus echoing the opening line that claims that the text is '*pur le determination final*' of the debate. Powell has also added the closing detail that John Sitsilt had charge of men at arms, this taken from a copy of a letter in CP vol 266.⁶¹ Given this reliance on the Cecil manuscript, it is likely that the account of the dispute was also translated from that source, but Powell cites the previously printed version in John Bossewell's *Workes* (which does not mention the 'men at armes'), thus broadening the authority of the account. Like Bossewell, Powell also affirms that Cecil has provided copies of the documents from which his genealogy is transcribed. When Powell finishes copying the English genealogy, he adds a citation, again marked with an asterisk and printed in blackletter:

* These petegrees and descents I gathered faithfullie out of sundrie ancient records and evidences, whereof the most part are confirmed with seales autentike therevnto appendant, manifestlie declaring the antiquitie and truth thereof; which remaine at this present in the custodie of the right Honorable Sir *William Cecill*, Knight of the noble order of the Garter, Lord Burghley, and Lord high Treasurer of *England*, who is lineallie descended from the last recited *Richard Sitsylt*, father to *Dauid Cecill*, grandfather to the said Sir *William Cecill* now Lord Burghley.⁶²

The language here – of ancient records, evidences and seals – once again echoes the self-authorising language of the three Cecil manuscripts and Bossewell. It is part of the rhetoric of spurious genealogy. With the publication of Powell's *Historia*, the full Cecil pedigree entered wide circulation. Only three years later, in 1587, it was quoted in its entirety (including Powell's note on his sources) in the second edition of Holinshed's *Chronicles*.⁶³

There is no reason to assume that Cecil had any direct influence on the second edition of Holinshed's *Chronicles*, but the appearance of his pedigree in its pages ensured that it would be known to antiquarians and historians for centuries. In the nineteen years since the story of John Sitsilt and William Fakneham was hurriedly inserted into the second edition of Legh's *Accedens*, the Cecil genealogy had been transformed from a simple list of names into a coherent narrative with supporting documentation. As these private papers expanded, Cecil, like other members of the Elizabethan nobility, also decorated his residence with murals depicting his ancestry and commissioned a fashionable heraldic pedigree roll to be shown to visitors. These private displays of the Cecil family's antiquity certainly had more impact than most: Queen Elizabeth herself would have walked past the murals at Theobalds, perhaps pausing to reflect on the 'Cecils' claims to long-standing national prominence'.⁶⁴ But it was Cecil's use of print that ensured that such claims were known throughout England. Gerard Legh may not have been thinking of Cecil when he originally devised the arms with lions rampand on five escotcheons. Richard Tottell and John Bossewell, in contrast, were acting as part of Cecil's own project to enhance the antiquity and honour of his name. As the narrative of the Cecil family developed in private

61. CP vol 266, fol 7r.

62. Powell 1584, 147.

63. Holinshed 1587, 3.1255–6. The second edition was greatly expanded after Holinshed's death in 1580. Powell is cited several times in the margins. Newberie and Denham acted as printers for both projects. On the history of Holinshed's *Chronicles*, see Heal and Summerson, 2012.

64. Sutton 2004, 71.

papers, the complete genealogy was made available to David Powell for his Welsh history, and this in turn was inserted into Holinshed's national history.

Each public appearance of the genealogy not only expanded its reach, but increased its authority. Cecil's private papers appeal to ancient documents and rolls of parchment, the authority of which is dependent on seals that cannot be read. Bossewell mentions this evidence, but his authority rests with Cecil himself, 'the ryght honorable the Lorde of Burghley'. Powell also invokes the language of ancient parchment documents, but he also cites Bossewell for corroboration. The editors of Holinshed's *Chronicle* cite both Bossewell and Powell. Such citations might seem circular, but the success of Cecil's project is evident, as the rhetoric of authenticated antiquity continued to be used to praise the lineage of Cecil even after his death in 1598. Before Elizabeth died in 1603, a short biography of Cecil was produced, possibly by his secretary Michael Hicks.⁶⁵ The author defends the antiquity of Cecil's lineage and name without providing many details. Cecil's father, he claims, 'was a Gentleman, descended from the *Cecills of Haulterennes* in *Wales*, a very auncient house, myself haveing seene many auncient authentique writings and evidences proving many lyneall descents, evene to himself, the copies whereof I have in my custody to shewe'.⁶⁶ Not only is the spelling '*Haulterennes*' (for *Alt-yr-ynys*) found in the English pedigree (it is the same place-name painted on the wall of Theobalds that Gough read as '... diforcines'), but the language of this claim again echoes the many notes on Cecil's genealogical documents and the printed citations of Bossewell and Powell. The documents' claims to antiquity, in this instance, are more significant than any ancestors actually named in them. This biography was printed by the eighteenth-century antiquarian Arthur Collins, who was apparently unsatisfied with mere assertions of ancient descent and he added an 'Account of the Family of Cecil' as a prologue to the whole work. For this, he cites numerous printed sources, including Powell and 'John Boswel's *Concords of Armory*, fol. 80'.⁶⁷ Collins would later recycle this account in his *Peerage of England*, where Holinshed is added to bolster the list of sources.⁶⁸ Cecil's attempts to disseminate the narrative of his chivalric ancestors and to provide authority for that narrative were thus remarkably successful. Based on the authority of Bossewell, Powell and Holinshed, Cecil's narrative continued to appear in genealogical reference works for centuries, obscuring the fact that a few private papers, made available (and possibly simply made) by Cecil himself, lie behind these very public accounts.

SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIAL

Supplementary material for this article is available online and can be found at <https://doi.org/10.1017/S000358152100038X>.

65. Hick's authorship is suggested by the modern editor; see Smith 1990, 8–11. Smith's edition is based on Collins's 1732 text.

66. Collins 1732, 4.

67. *Ibid.*, iii–vi. The citation is presumably taken from Powell 1584.

68. Brydges 1812, 1.582–4.

ABBREVIATIONS AND BIBLIOGRAPHY

Abbreviations

- Bodleian Bodleian Library, Oxford
 BL British Library, London
 CP Cecil Papers, Hatfield House Archives

Manuscript sources

- BL, Harley MS 2259: Richard Strangways, *Tractatus nobilis de lege et expositione armorum*, 1455
 BL, Harley MS 6108, 'The history of Brecon and Glamorgan until the year 1606', 1606
 Bodleian, MS Ashmole Rolls 4, 'Coats of arms of sovereigns of Europe and English nobility', c 1334, <https://digital.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/objects/29088344-cad8-43ff-945b-9320baada63b/>
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 CP, vol 143/12, /22, /36, /47, /50
 CP, vol 204/2
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