

**THE COATS-OF-ARMS  
OF SIR JOHN MORE AND HIS DESCENDANTS**

The Locky version of the augmented More family group (now in the National Portrait gallery) had nine coats-of-arms painted on it. Six of these coats were removed when the painting was cleaned in 1975. The official reason for this removal was as follows.

‘The coats-of-arms were discovered to be 17th century additions. In order to be consistent and in keeping with the original, it was therefore decided to remove them.’

This was an unfortunate decision as the picture (of small value as a painting) was a family record and without it we should not have known what coats-of-arms some members of the family bore. Fortunately a note had been made of the blazons. The reproductions of the picture are too small for all the details to be clear.

In the following descriptions, \* indicates that this coat-of-arms has been removed. The blazons begin on the left with the one above Sir John More.

\* \* \*

(1)\*. *Quarterly : 1 and 4, Argent a Chevron engrailed between three Moorcocks Sable, crested Gules ; 2 and 3, Argent on a Chevron between three unicorns' Heads erased Sable as many Bezants. Crest : a Moor's bust in profile Proper, from the ear two annulets conjoined, Or, a shirt also Proper.*

1 and 4 are the More arms but the ‘unicorn’ coat (2 and 3) has never been identified ; it must refer back to one of Sir John More’s ancestors, perhaps the Leycesters. John Leycester, the grandfather of John More’s mother, was a Chancery clerk about 1455. He is described in a document as “gentleman of London”. It may therefore be presumed that he was armigerous, but his arms are not recorded. This coat is reproduced on the title-page of Stanley Morison and Nicolas Barker, *The Likeness of Thomas More* (1963) ,

and E.E. Reynolds, *The Field is Won* (1968).

- (2)\*. Above Anne Cresacre.  
Or three Lions rampant guardant Gules. Crest : On a Wreath of the Colours a Cat-a-Mountain couchant Proper. The arms of the Cresacre family, of Barnborough, co. York. A fine shield – three red lions on a gold background.
- (3)\*. Above Sir Thomas More.  
The Quartered arms of More impaling three Horses or Colts passant Sable. The impaled coat is that of Jane Colt ; it is a canting or punning coat.
- (4)\*. Above John More II : his marital coat.  
The quartered arms of More and Cresacre.
- (5)\*. Above John More III, eldest son of Thomas More II.  
More quartering Cresacre.
- (6). Above Thomas More II.  
More quartering Cresacre.
- (7). Above Mary (Scrope) wife of Thomas More II. The upper coat. 1. Azure a Bend Or (Scrope) ; 2. Argent a Saltire engrailed Gules (Tiptoft) ; 3. Argent a Fess between two Bars gemelles Gules (Badlesmere) ; 4. Azure Bend Or a Label Gules (the label indicates a younger son). Over all a crescent for difference – this is to distinguish Scrope of Masham from Scrope of Bolton. The crest is too indistinct to be described.
- (8)\*. Below (7). The arms of Mary (Scrope) More.  
Shows More quartering Cresacre with (7) impaling.
- (9). In the small picture above Cresacre More is a portrait of Anne (Cresacre) More in later life, looking down, as it were, at herself as a girl. The arms are More quartered with Cresacre impaling, surmounted by crests of both families.

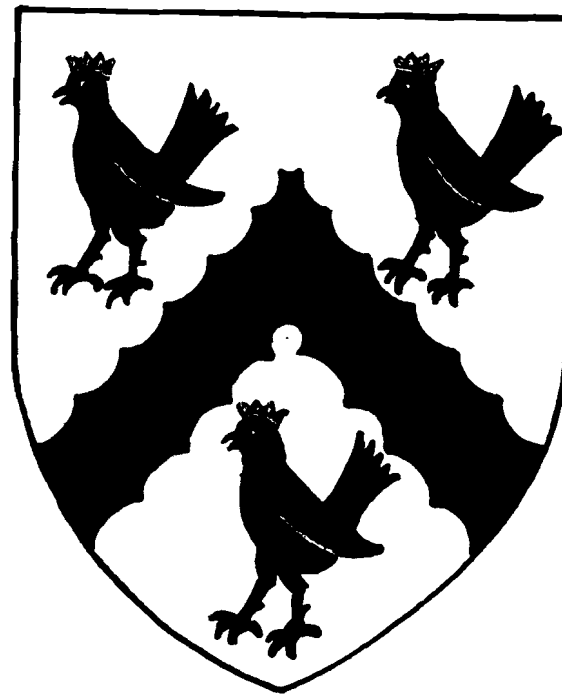
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In (7) the Scrope arms and the Tiptoft arms indicate that Thomas More II married into two of the oldest post-conquest English families – a fact that his present descendants can regard with

some satisfaction. As a general rule the more simple the design of a coat of arms, the more ancient the family ; both Scrope and Tiptoft meet this requirement. The Cresacre arms are relatively simple and this also suggests an old family.

The Scropes (or Scroopes) were prominent in medieval history (see Shakespeare's historical plays). Quite a number of them were beheaded ; this seems to have been a family hazard ! Not that any family felt disgraced if one of its members was beheaded ; it was evidence of nobility, of blue blood ! Thus, St John Fisher, as a bishop, was a noble, and was therefore beheaded. St Thomas More was a commoner (kighthood did not ennoble) and he had therefore to face the full penalty of treason, i.e. hanging and quartering. This is probably what he had in mind when he wrote to Margaret, '... my flesh much more shrinking from pain and from death than methought it the part of a faithful Christian man' (Rogers, p. 210). It is at least to the credit of the King that he commuted hanging into beheading.

The Tiptofts also had their place in history. The most notable of them was John Tiptoft, Earl of Worcester (executed 1470) ; he was famed for his learning and as a generous patron of scholars ; but he was also notorious for his savage cruelty.



E.E.R.

*Mr. Reynolds  
will pardon us  
for reproducing  
here his own  
pen-and-ink de-  
sign of the More  
Arms – argent  
and gules to be  
added by our im-  
agination.*

G.M.