

ARMORIAL SEAL OF ALEXANDER DE
WHITTLE

By *Frederic Crooks, F.S.A.*

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THIS is a photograph of an impression taken from the original fourteenth-century matrix, formerly in the possession of Dr. Philip Nelson, M.A., F.R.S.E., F.S.A., and now in the British Museum. The *Arms* are: *A chevron charged with a molet. Crest: a bird.* The latter is possibly a Raven or a Cornish Chough, and it is rising from what appears to be a cap of maintenance. There is a background of two trees growing on hillocks, and the legend reads: S ALEXI' DE QWYTELL'.

The original matrix is of silver, conical in shape, and has a quatrefoil head.¹

This Alexander de Whittle is believed to have been a member of the Whittle family of Lancashire, which was settled at, and took their name from Whittle-le-Woods, in this County in the twelfth century.²

I suggest that the following may be an explanation of the arms on this seal. The Whittles held certain lands in Whittle-le-Woods during the thirteenth century under the Butlers of Rawcliffe.³ The arms of the Butlers of Rawcliffe and Kirkland, Co. Lancaster, were: A chevron between three covered cups; *the chevron being charged with three molets.*⁴ The coat displayed on this Whittle seal appears to be a variant adopted from part of the

¹ Information of Dr. Nelson.

² *Trans. Hist. Soc. Lancs. & Ches.*, 78, p. 57. *Notes on the Crooks of Crook, Whittle-le-Woods.*

³ *V.C.H. Lancs.*, vi, 33 n.

⁴ Gregson, *Fragments of Lancs.*, 182 and 267, and Foster, *Some Feudal Coats of Arms.*

FIG. 14.



ARMORIAL SEAL OF ALEXANDER DE WHITTLE.

(Enlarged. Original measures $1\frac{1}{16}$ inches diameter.)

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arms of the Butlers of Rawcliffe and Kirkland, and it has been suggested to me by Dr. Nelson that the two trees on the background of the seal may be intended for a punning reference to *Whittle-le-Woods*.

Another Butler connexion may be noted here. One branch of the Whittles settled at Great Sankey (Prescot parish) in the fourteenth century, where they held lands before 1355, when William le Boteler brought a suit against Henry de Whittle concerning 16 acres in Great Sankey.¹ A Richard Whittle served as an archer with Sir William Butler at the battle of Agincourt in 1415.² Thomas Whittle of Great Sankey fought at Flodden in 1513, and died of wounds at Newcastle soon afterwards, leaving a widow who survived him only a year, and an infant son Gilbert Whittle, whose wardship was claimed by Sir Thomas Butler.³

¹ *V.C.H. Lancs.*, iii, 410 n.

² *Trans. Hist. Soc. Lancs. & Ches.*, 55 and 56, p. 302.

³ *V.C.H. Lancs.*, iii, 410 n.