

# Parrots, Pears, Stags, & Lions.

by P.J.Perrott



Here is a quiz question for you (sorry, no prizes!): What is the connection between the sentence 'Gules, 3 pear or, on a chief argent a demi lion rampant, sable, and you?

There will be a short pause while you work it out..... and now, just in case you didn't get it, the phrase describes, in heraldic language, the Perrott coat of arms which we use in the Society's logo, shown on the left; and you are a member of that Society!

Put into more easily comprehensible language it says : " 3 golden pears on a red background; above them on a silver background the top half of a black lion, displaying its front paws." This description is of the emblem of the Perrotts of Drayton and Oxford and appears in 'Visitations of Oxfordshire'; but it is certainly not the only crest connected with the name. Many other 'P' families had their own coats of arms; several of them included at least one pear, while many others included a parrot - presumably chosen because it was a pun on the family name.

(In passing I am using the terms 'coat of arms' and 'crest' loosely; in heraldry, the complete design is known as an 'Achievement of Arms').



Reference books on heraldry are many and varied and most public libraries seem to have a collection of them. There is no easy way of checking their accuracy, but one of the most easily available is 'Fairbairns Crests' and from it I have taken details of 10 Perrott crests; though interestingly the one described above does not feature in it. Here are some of them. I have translated the heraldic language into something more easily understandable:

"Parrot or Parrott, of England - a parrot on a red background.

"Parrot of Oxfordshire - a parrot on a green background"

"Perrott of Ireland and Berkshire - a parrot on a green background with a golden pear in its right claw."

"Perrott of Wales - a parrot holding a pear, both in their natural colours."

"Parrett of Kent and Oxfordshire. - a parrot with its wings folded, in natural colours and on a red background, in its right claw a golden pear, and on its breast a star." (In passing, the star - 'mullet' - in heraldic language indicated that the crest belonged to the third son of the original holder of the crest.)

What does an heraldic parrot look like? Diagram A shows how it would appear; and diagram B shows the form that the star mentioned in the last crest would take.

Popular as parrots and pears were in the family crests, some branches of the family had totally different arms. One Perrott family had 'a bull's head in black, its lower edge cut off cleanly on a silver background. The diagram on the right ('C') shows how such an animal would have looked. In the particular crest described above the bull also wore a collar described as being made of "2 gold bars."







The stag is a popular animal in heraldry so it is perhaps not surprising that one features on a 'P' crest. Fairbairn lists:

"Perrott of England - a stag's head, proper (ie in its natural colours)."

The heraldic stag is a fearsome animal, though I think there may be some artistic licence in the way its antlers are depicted: see diagram D!

Fearsome as bulls and stags may be, there is nothing quite like having a lion on your coat of arms! According to Fairbairn at least two Perrott families used the animal on their crests, thus:

"Perrot of England - a lion's head in black, with

a jagged bottom edge." A lion answering to this description is shown in Diagram E.

Best of all though has to be the crest attributed to Perrott of Ireland - "On an ancient Royal chapeau, a lion of Britain, imperially crowned". Diagram F shows this lion (with its remarkably human face!) wearing its 'Imperial Crown.'

As I mentioned earlier libraries are full of books on heraldry, so it is very likely that you will find references to other coats of arms used at some time or other by a 'P' family - I would like to hear from you if you do, and we will publish the details in 'FAMILY NOTES'.

I have myself come across an Achievement of Arms used by the family, and it is noteworthy because it does not use any form of animal in its design.

Historically, the earliest forms of the emblems were geometrical shapes, easily recognised in battle by illiterate soldiers, when displayed on a banner or shield. This particular design is not mentioned in 'Fairbairn's Crests.' William of Wykeham (1324 - 1404), Bishop of Winchester, had a William Perrott as his nephew by marriage. This Perrott family had a crest described thus: "Argent 5 mullets pierced or in cross sable", which, translated means "5 black stars, each with a golden centre spot, arranged in the form of a cross." My final diagram, G, shows this arrangement.

Late last year the Society made enquiries of the College of Heraldry about instances of the Perrott arms in mediaeval sources. The reply was erudite, and because of the Norman French which plays such a large part in heraldry, very hard to understand. However it is hoped to produce another article, based on the reply, and to make its language intelligible to those who do not find it easy to comprehend the original.

In the meantime, if you come across any other versions of the 'P' family 'Coats of Arms', do please drop the Editor a line; these old symbols

are of never failing interest to most family historians. Of course, most of the families entitled to use them have died out, but there always remains the hope - faint though it may be! - that somewhere in the Society is someone who has an hereditary right to bear the arms. For the rest of us, probably the only Arms we shall wear is when we wear the Society badge, as depicted at the head of this article!

