

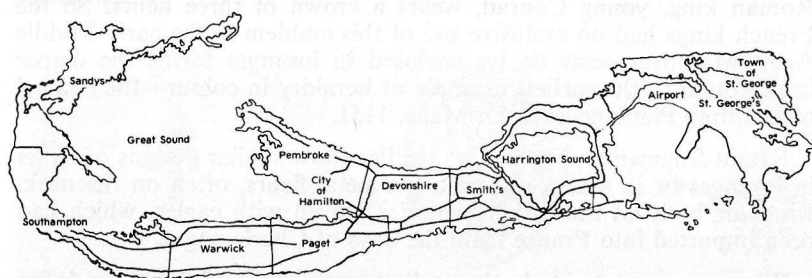
HARPER, R.W.E. : HERALDRY IN BERMUDA.

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Heraldry in Bermuda

BY R. W. E. HARPER

ON A RECENT visit to Bermuda I was immediately struck by the civic pride taken in the display of heraldry throughout the island. Arriving by air, one first sees the beautifully painted shields of arms – each about six feet by four feet – the work of William H. Harrington – which decorate the walls of the lounge of Bermuda's modern airport. These are the arms of Britain's earliest self-governing colony and of those English families during the reign of Elizabeth I – patrons of the old Bermuda Company – who gave their names to the various parishes into which Bermuda is divided. Visitors arriving by sea and disembarking at Hamilton – Bermuda's capital, would see these same arms, constructed in concrete and adorning the facade of the Bank of Bermuda, just a short distance away.



Looking at the map of Bermuda and listing the parishes from West to East, the first we came to is **Sandys** – named after Sir William Sandys (1561–1629), M.P. for Andover and second son of the Archbishop of York, a patron (as are those that follow) of the Bermuda Company, the history of which is a rewarding study. Arms: *Or a fess dancetty between three crosses crosslet fitchy gules*. Next, **Southampton**, named after Henry Wriothesly, 3rd Earl of Southampton (1573–1624) an intimate friend of Shakespeare. Arms: *Azure, a cross Or between four falcons close argent*. The shield is surrounded by the Garter. Then **Warwick**, named after Robert Rich, 2nd Earl of Warwick (1587–1658) who became a member of the Bermuda Company in 1614. Arms: *Gules a chevron between three crosses crosslet Or*.

Paget comes next, named after William 4th Lord Paget (1572–1629). In 1612 he became a member of the Virginia Company which then included Bermuda. Arms: *Sable on a cross engrailed between four eagles argent five lions sable*. Followed by **Pembroke**, named after William Herbert (1580–1630), 3rd Earl of Pembroke who joined the council of the Virginia Company in 1609 and the Bermuda Company in 1615. Arms: *Per pale azure and gules, three lions rampant argent*. The shield being surrounded by the Garter.

Devonshire was named after William Cavendish (1552–1626) 1st Earl of Devonshire. He was an uncle of the Earl of Pembroke and became a member of the Virginia Company in 1612 and of the Bermuda Company in 1615. Arms: *Sable three stags' heads caboshed argent attired Or.* **Smiths** was named after Sir Thomas Smith (1558–1623). Smith rose from humble circumstances to become Governor of the East India Company. He was Treasurer to the Virginia Company (which included Bermuda) in 1620. Arms: *Azure a chevron engrailed between three lions guardant Or.* **Hamilton** was named after James (1589–1625), 2nd Marquess of Hamilton, a favourite of James I and a member of the Council for the Plantations in New England. Arms: *Quarterly 1 & 4 Gules three cinquefoils ermine 2 & 3 Argent a lymphad sable.* The shield is surrounded by the Garter. It should perhaps be pointed out that these parishes have no official title to the arms which bear their names. The most easterly parish was first named after **Lord De la Warr** – arms: *Gules semy of crosses paty fitchy a lion rampant argent,* but is now known as St. Georges'. St. Georges' has its own civic coat of arms: *Barry wavy argent and azure over all a cross gules.* For crest: *out of a mural crown argent a representation of the wreck of the Sea Venture proper.* Supporters: *Dexter, a sealion gules langued and armed azure winged Or, tail proper. Sinister: a seahorse argent winged, Or, tail proper.* Motto: A TOWNE ANTIENT AND LOYAL.

The city of Hamilton also has its own civic arms, the full achievement in colour is proudly displayed on the outer wall of Hamilton's City Hall. The arms borrow the Hamilton cinquefoils, and may be blazoned: *Azure a three-masted schooner in full sail proper between three cinquefoils ermine.* The crest is *a seahorse holding a sprig vert* and the supporters are *dexter, a mermaid admiring herself in a glass, argent, and sinister, a sea horse with a sprig vert in its mouth.* Motto: SPARSA COLLEGIT.

In Queen Street, Hamilton, is a fine old house once owned by William B. Perot, Bermuda's postmaster in the mid-nineteenth century. He created Bermuda's first stamp by writing his name across the Hamilton postmark. These were sold as stamps and are now most rare and sought after by philatelists. Nearby, and in the same street, is the recently restored Perot post office. Behind the counter may be seen a large representation in colour of the Perot (1849) arms: *Quarterly per fess indented Or and azure four mascles, all counter-changed.*

The most famous name in Bermuda's history is Sir George Somers (1554–1610). He gave his name to the Somers Islands Company, later to become the Bermuda Company. It was his ship the Sea Venture, sailing in a convoy of eight ships to Virginia in 1609 which was blown off course and wrecked on the reefs off the East coast, now St. Georges' Island. The story of how he got his crew and passengers ashore and their subsequent adventures makes thrilling reading. Sir George Somers died in Bermuda in 1610, and his heart is buried at St. Georges', while his body was returned to England for internment in the parish church of Whitechurch Canonicorum, Dorset, where his arms, *Vert a fess*

dancetty ermine, a crescent for difference, may be seen on his memorial today.

Another adventurer and companion of Somers in the fatal voyage of the 'Sea Venture' was Sir Thomas Gates who came ashore with the first boatload of survivors. He named the place where they landed Gates Bay. In 1610, Silas Jourdan published a *Discoverie of the Bermudas by Sir Thomas Gates with divers others* which laid the groundwork on which Shakespeare's *Tempest* was built. The arms of Gates in the Harleian Collection are given as: *Azure, three lions rampant guardant Or, on a chief of the last a gate between two mascles sable*.



Fig. 1

The arms of the Colony of Bermuda (Fig. 1) are *Argent on a mount vert a lion sejant affrontee gules supporting between the fore-paws an antique shield azure thereon a representation of the wreck of the ship 'Sea Venture', all proper*. The motto: *QUO FATA FERUNT* (Whither the Fates Lead Us).

However, the arms of the old Bermuda Company (Fig. 2) are blazoned: *Argent a ship in a wrought sea, wrecked between two rocks, all proper*. And for the crest: *Upon a helme and a torse of argent and gules, a Boar on a mount between two palmetts trees proper*, and also two Tritons for their supporters. The motto: *PERIISSEMUS NISI PERIISSEMUS* (We should have perished had we not persevered).

I discussed this change of arms with E. A. Burton, a keen local heraldist, who runs the firm of Heraldry Bermuda. He told me that the present Bermuda coat of arms was granted by Royal Warrant in 1910 as a result of a specific request by the Bermuda Government to the College of Arms to mark the island's tercentenary anniversary. The design, based faithfully on the seal of the Bermuda Company (1615-1684), was also specifically requested. The Bermuda Company seal is



Fig. 2

known to have been in use as early as 1622. It is shown on Norwood's map of Bermuda engraved in 1626.

Mr. Burton went on to say 'In absence of any proof to the contrary, it is believed that the design of the Bermuda Company seal, in the first place was also intended for the arms. However, only the depiction of the wreck survived when the arms were assigned in 1635; all of which, including a pen and ink drawing by a contemporary artist, is duly recorded in the College of Arms. The reason for the change in design is not known, but it may have been due to the esteem gained by the Bermuda Company over the intervening years which resulted in the award of a crest and supporters, thereby necessitating the removal of the lion sejant affronte gules.

Mr. Burton added 'The absence of a painting at the air terminal of the Bermuda Company's arms is due to the existence of the old grant being either overlooked or ignored for 350 years, in fact until research by Heraldry Bermuda had brought it to light. Hopefully this will be rectified one day. There seems little doubt that had there been knowledge of these early arms in 1910, they would have been automatically assigned to the Colony – witness the following quoted from 1635 grant: . . . 'I, the said John Burrough, do by these Presents and by virtue of mine office of Garter, Assigne, Grant, and Confirme to the

said Company and their Successors for ever'. This may be so, but it is arguable whether the Colony of Bermuda can be considered the successor of the old Bermuda Company.

Finally, let us return to St. Georges' and inspect the coats of arms on the various memorials in the old church of St. Peter's. Here one sees the arms of one of Bermuda's oldest families, the Tuckers, whose arms are *Azure a chevron between three sealions couchant Or*. On another memorial are the arms of Bridger-Goodrich (1793): *Azure semée of cross crosslets a lion rampant argent*, impaling: *Argent a chevron between three crabs gules*. The Bridger arms are distinctive, as crabs are not a very familiar charge. I was therefore interested to find these arms on memorials in the old Sussex Churches of Old Shoreham, Southwick, Hamsey and Highbrook. No doubt some relation emigrated to Bermuda many years ago.

On another memorial are the arms of Alured Popple a former Governor of Bermuda. The arms are: *Quarterly 1 & 4 Or on a bend sable three eagles displayed argent, 2 & 3 gules a chevron between three talbots heads erased argent*, impaling: *Per fess – in chief, Or a fess ermine and in base azure a lion statant Or*. The arms on John Barr's memorial 1772–1833 are shown as: *Argent a fess indented chequy between three pomegranates, leaved proper*. In the cemetery is the grave of the late lamented Governor, Sir Richard Sharples, assassinated on the 10th March 1973. The headstone bears his arms . . . *A chevron between in chief two trees eradicated and in base the white-tailed tropic-bird*. The eradicated tree would seem a somewhat prophetic charge, and the white-tailed tropic-bird or Longtail very appropriate, as it is indigenous to Bermuda. Arriving in early March they depart to sea again by October. Watched for eagerly, they are Bermuda's traditional heralds of Spring.

Visitors to the imposing offices of Bacardi Rum in Hamilton, Bermuda, will be handed a small pamphlet which describes how Don Facundo Bacardi, the originator of the famous rum, came to adopt the badge of a bat displayed sable on a field gules. One story is that a friendly colony of bats made their residence under the eaves of the tin-roof shed that housed the first Bacardi distillery. When Don Facundo was looking for a mark to distinguish his rum, his wife suggested the bat as the new enterprise's symbol. The pamphlet goes on to say that a review of the Catalonian background of Don Facundo however suggests another and deeper aspect for his choice.

Bats have long been used in heraldry as a symbol of watchfulness. For many years a bat has been included in the armory of Barcelona and is still prominent in the armorial achievement of Valencia's capital. History dates the association of the bat with Valencia back some eight centuries, to 1238, when King James I – known to the Spaniards as The Conqueror, ruled in Spain. According to the legend, a bat once perched upon the King's helmet, which the good-humoured king immediately adopted as his crest. Traditional folklore associates the bat as a symbol of family unity.

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