

New Westminster's Coat of Arms

The Diocesan Coat of Arms appears in many places. It was on the letter that the bishop sent to every Anglican family last month, for example. But what does it symbolize? The Rev. Robert Black of Toronto, expert in the field has graciously provided the following information.

The description

The Letters Patent granting the arms of the Diocese of New Westminster were granted through the College of Arms in London UK on February 10, 1960 (Grants, volume CXXII, folio 212). The "blazon" or technical description is: "Azure a Cross Patonce between Five Martlets Or on a Chiefdancetty of three points Gold a Pale ermine thereon a Mitre proper between two Roses Gules barbed and seeded also proper."

In plain English, the description would be: The bottom part of the shield has a blue background, on which is a gold "patonce" cross surrounded by five martlets. The top part has three indentations pointing towards the bottom; the first and last third has a gold background featuring an English rose in its natural colours, and the centre third has an ermine background with a bishop's mitre in its ordinary colours.

The design

As is often found in traditional heraldry, a shield design draws on allusions to others with the same name. This shield is for "New" Westminster, a church related institution, and so the design refers first of all to the "old" Westminster, in this case, the post-Reformation arms borne by the Abbey Church of St. Peter in Westminster, London, England. Simple enough.

The Abbey arms, in turn, were based on the "reputed" arms of King Edward the Confessor, who in fact died before heraldry was in use. "His" arms (the bottom part of your shield) was created long after the fact from coins designed and struck during his realm. It is nowadays believed that the birds on the coins had been doves, taken from his sceptre, and standing for peace and "good news" (cf. end of the Flood account in Genesis), and therefore allude to the gospel. What is shown is "messenger birds" or martlets, invented by the medieval heralds and always drawn without feet, since they were thought always to be in the air. Here they can still be claimed as "messengers of [good] news from the cross" appropriate - enough for a diocese!

The top is in gold and ermine, the offi-

cial "liveries" of the English monarchy. You'll sometimes see "coronation portraits" with the Sovereign wearing clothing made from cloth of gold and lined in ermine. That's what you see alluded to on the shield, obviously because Westminster Abbey was a "Royal peculiar." The first bishops would, I am sure, not have been unhappy to make such a close association for themselves. The roses stand for England, and the bishop's mitre (obviously!) for the bishop. The dividing line between top and bottom is jagged to represent New Westminster's

you wish.

History of the design

The design was created with the diocese in 1879 for the seal of the first bishop. It's hard to know who designed it, but I have three leading contenders.

Under the former imperial system, a diocese once began life with a coat of arms issued by Royal warrant (i.e., directly from the Crown) to signify the Crown's favour of its operations. After the repeal of the centralist principal in 1846, and the granting of internal colonial self-govern-

score. When in Montreal a decision was delayed by provincial synod about who was to be the first bishop of Algoma (1879), the waiting metropolitan bishop, Ashton Oxenden of Montreal, doodled the new diocese's design combining his own episcopal arms with those of the secular province of Ontario. The eventual choice, Frederick Fauquier, subsequently complained, "I have been sent out for mission work 'armed' only with arms sketched on a scrap!"

Oxenden knew something about heraldry, and so in the 1870's did many gentlemen. Your diocesan shield most probably was designed by one of the Wyons, members of the family who ran the British engraving company that produced episcopal seals and rings. They are certainly on record as producing Bishop Sillitoe's seal in 1879. (Cf. Conrad Swan, "Sopie Canadian Seals by the Wyons" in *Heraldry in Canada*.)

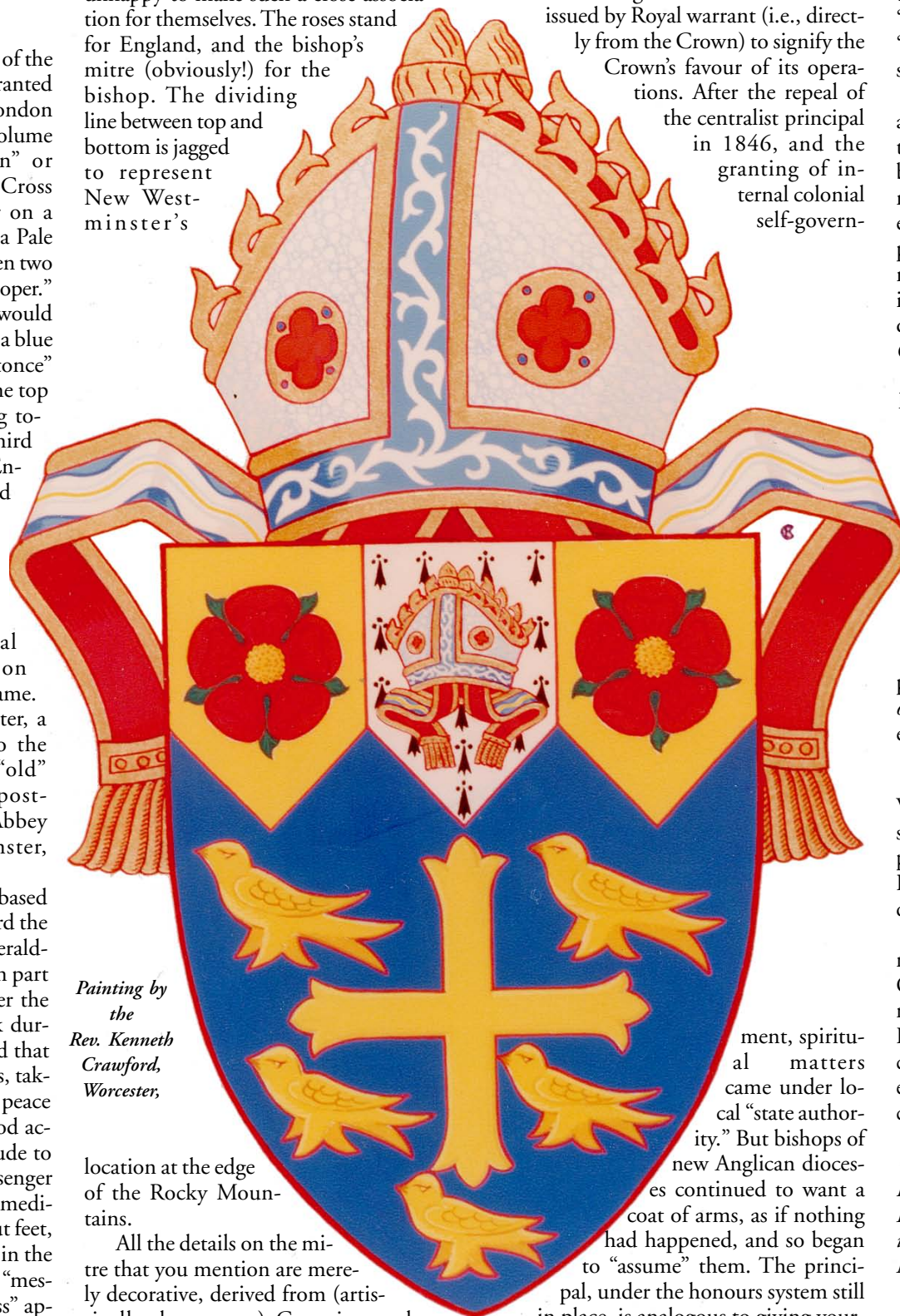
Then again the Toronto lawyer and heraldist, Edward Marion Chadwick, "father of heraldry in Canada", could also have designed it. He was very active at this time and was very well known; the arms of Ottawa diocese, for example, are his creation. It could also have been generated by the noted British heraldist (and Scottish Episcopal priest) John Woodward. I wonder about this connection because he is the first to mention it, first, in *Notes & Queries* for April 9, 1881, page 286, and then in his book *A Treatise on Ecclesiastical Heraldry* (1894) where he explains the rationale behind it.

Artistic versions

We have two professional versions of this shield, which I hope might be of use. First is a photograph of a painting of this shield by the Rev'd Kenneth Crauford, formerly of the diocese of Melbourne, Australia.

Second is a line drawing of this shield, made by Canada's foremost heraldic artist, Gordon Macpherson. It was produced with many others in 1987-88 for the "Heraldry and Flag project," General Synod Archives. The collection as a whole was purchased by Michael Lloyd for the Anglican Book Centre, and can be provided for any legitimate use.

Robert Black headed the "Heraldry and Flag Project" for the General Synod, and collected information on diocesan arms, including New Westminster's. He lives in Toronto.



Painting by the Rev. Kenneth Crauford, Worcester,

location at the edge of the Rocky Mountains.

All the details on the mitre that you mention are merely decorative, derived from (artistically degenerate) Georgian and pseudo-Gothique models. (They drive me crazy.) You can show the mitre any way

ment, spiritual matters came under local "state authority." But bishops of new Anglican dioceses continued to want a coat of arms, as if nothing had happened, and so began to "assume" them. The principal, under the honours system still in place, is analogous to giving yourself the right to wear a medal.

There's a mildly amusing story on that

Cathedral has a Coat of Arms as well

Christ Church Cathedral has a coat of arms as well as does the diocese.

As the place where the bishop's chair is kept, or the "cathedra," the cathedral's arms incorporate the picture of a chair - and at the top, the diocese's arms.

The cathedral's coat of arms is Canadian (in Volume III, page 277, public register of Arms, Flags and Badges of Canada), and granted in 1998.

The heraldic description: "Argent in base two bars wavy Azure surmounted by a Celtic cross throughout Gules charge at the centre with a Salish spindle whorl

Argent bearing a Chi Rho Azure encircled by three salmon in Salish style interlaced Copper."

In other words a circle of three Salish style salmon, copper coloured, inside a Celtic cross, and at the very centre the Greek letters chi and rho (the first letters of *Christos*), with waves at the bottom symbolizing the sea.

The motto, "I hold before you an open door," was the text (adopted from Revelation 3:8) of the first sermon preached by the first rector, the Rev. H. P. Hobson, who was appointed in 1888.

