

ARMS AND THE WOMAN: THE HERALDRY OF WOMEN PARLIAMENTARIANS

DUNCAN SUTHERLAND M.A., PH.D.

Abstract

While there is a longstanding tradition of parliamentarians bearing arms, women politicians seem to have started receiving them only after the admission of women to the House of Lords in 1958. Since that time just a minority of women peers have received arms, and even fewer women MPs have done so. Yet this exploration of a selection of these arms highlights some interesting lives and careers. Of particular interest is the use of symbols representing political causes and commemorating achievements in non-political fields of endeavour. Taken together these arms perhaps illustrate women's evolving role in public life and society more generally since their political emancipation in 1918.

Throughout the Palace of Westminster are innumerable coats of arms commemorating royalty, office-holders, judges, military leaders and members of both Houses who gave their lives in combat or were killed while in office. The most recent addition to this last category are the arms of Batley and Spennings MP Jo Cox who was tragically murdered in 2016 (**Figure 1**). As a memorial, arms were granted posthumously in 2017 and are displayed on a plaque in the House of Commons chamber. They have four roses for herself, her husband and their two children. The roses are gules for Labour and Lancashire, where her husband was born, and argent for Yorkshire, where she was born and elected. The *barry wavy and chevronel argent* evoke rivers and hills in the Lake District where she enjoyed walking, while vert and purple are the colours of the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU).¹ The motto 'More in common' comes from her maiden speech, where she expressed her belief that 'we...have far more in common than that which divides us'.²

While in recent years parliamentary authorities have been actively acquiring portraits of women politicians, this is a rare example of a female parliamentarian commemorated at Westminster through heraldry. Given its military origins heraldry has traditionally

¹ Interestingly, a *chevron argent* was used on a shield-shaped WSPU pin badge. The WSPU had another heraldic emblem featuring their slogan 'Votes for Women' in green on a purple lozenge topped with a forget-me-not bow.

² *Aspects of Heraldry*, 32 (2018), pp.5–6.

THE COAT OF ARMS



Figure 1: Arms of Jo Cox (2017) Source: Wikimedia.

been a masculine practice, although as early as 1558 arms were granted to Mary Mathew, wife of a Lord Mayor of London.³ However throughout history there are far more examples of women using their father's or husband's arms than being granted their own. A number of female politicians fall into the former category, especially early MPs whose husbands were peers, but also more recent women like Shirley Williams and Theresa May. However the arms granted to women themselves are a more rewarding subject of study as they reflect women's careers, interests and achievements.

³ Charles A.H. Franklin, *The Bearing of Coat-armour by Ladies* (London, 1923), p. 92.



Figure 2: Viscountess Wolseley's arms (supporters assigned 1925) in Hove Library.
 Photograph by the author.

This survey was undertaken to mark the centenary of women's enfranchisement and the sixtieth anniversary of their admission to the House of Lords in 2018. A search of *Debrett's Peerage*, *Burke's Peerage* and the College of Arms' Archive found over fifty women parliamentarians who have been granted arms or supporters during those sixty years, most of them from among the roughly 300 women life peers created over that time. Since the 2000s the number of women peers created has greatly increased, with women forming almost a third of all appointments since 2010, but the number of women peers receiving arms has been lower than in the 1990s. Of these known armigers, thirty-six are Conservatives, with the rest divided roughly evenly between Labour, Cross-benchers or Liberal and Liberal Democrats.

It is striking that so few women peers have sought arms, though the equivalent figures for men may be comparable. As early as the 1960s some peers cited cost as a deterrent.⁴ While women's arms cost less as they lack crests, this can still be problematic. Jane Ewart-Biggs, created a life peer in 1981, wrote that learning of this distinction gave her 'the first realisation that the makings of a full-blooded feminist were lurking inside me'.⁵

⁴ Alma Birk, 'Birk's Peerage', *Nova* (November 1968), 74; Morgan Phillips (Ed.), *Baroness Phillips of Fulham: A Memoir* (e-book, 2014), Loc. 65.

⁵ Jane Ewart-Biggs, *Lady in the Lords* (London, 1988), p. 15.

THE COAT OF ARMS

As far back as 1956 *Debrett's* called for women to be treated equally in heraldry, noting that the prohibition on their use of helmets made less sense after thousands of women had worn helmets in the war.⁶ Nonetheless, examining women politicians' arms offers a novel way of exploring some interesting lives and careers. This article will examine a selection of women's arms, presented in an order roughly corresponding with the period when each woman was most politically prominent rather than the dates of the grants.

Long before women could vote or sit in either House of Parliament, they could inherit peerages in certain cases. The 1920s saw unsuccessful efforts made to enable women peers to sit in the Lords and some women like the second Viscountess Wolseley lobbied peers to support these proposals. Frances Wolseley had succeeded her father Field Marshal Viscount Wolseley in 1913, pioneered the training of women gardeners by founding two schools, and served on the women's branch of East Sussex's wartime Board of Agriculture.⁷ She later established an agricultural and horticultural reading room at Hove Library and wished to decorate it with her arms, so had them embellished with a grant of supporters in 1925. These were a male figure of Agriculture and the Roman goddess Demeter, for horticulture (**Figure 2**).⁸ Her arms can still be seen on a mural in Hove Library's Wolseley Room.

Women were finally admitted to the House of Lords by the Life Peerages Act (1958) and the subject of heraldry arose in the debate on the bill. Leading the opposition to women's admission was Lord Airlie, prompting Leader of the House Lord Home to muse that Airlie's motto '*A fin*' ('To the end') was apparently how long he wanted to delay women's admission. Home described the lady standing behind a portcullis on Airlie's crest as looking wistfully toward the day when she would be released from bondage and could move freely among her equals. Home urged peers to play Prince Charming by rejecting Airlie's amendment, which they did by a decisive margin.⁹

The first fourteen life peers appointed in 1958 included four women. Baroness Ravensdale of Kedleston was already a hereditary peer and had arms from her father Lord Curzon, while Labour's Barbara Wootton felt arms were unnecessary for a life peer.¹⁰ However the other two women were granted new arms. Stella Isaacs, the Dowager Marchioness of Reading (1894–1971), was the founding chairman of the Women's Voluntary Service and became the first woman peer to take her seat, as Baroness Swanborough. Established to organize women's contribution to civil defence, the WVS expanded its war work to include assisting displaced civilians, and had one million members by 1942. She was asked by the government to continue its operations in peacetime and expanded its welfare work.¹¹

The arms she received paid tribute to the WVS and its members (**Figure 3**). Her supporters, suggested by Garter Sir George Bellew, wear WVS ordinary (dexter) and civil

⁶ *Debrett* (1956), pp. 26–27.

⁷ 'Viscountess Wolseley', *The Times*, 28 December 1936.

⁸ Aubrey Toppin, *Bluemantle Pursuivant to Viscountess Wolseley*, 25 October 1924; Toppin to Wolseley, 21 November 1924, in *The Wolseley Collection*, Brighton & Hove City Libraries, FGW 144.

⁹ *Lords Hansard*, 5s, v. 206, c. 211, 3 December 1957.

¹⁰ 'New Peeresses discuss robes', *Birmingham Post* (25 July 1958).

¹¹ 'Stella, Dowager Marchioness of Reading', *The Times*, 24 May 1971.

WOMEN PARLIAMENTARIANS

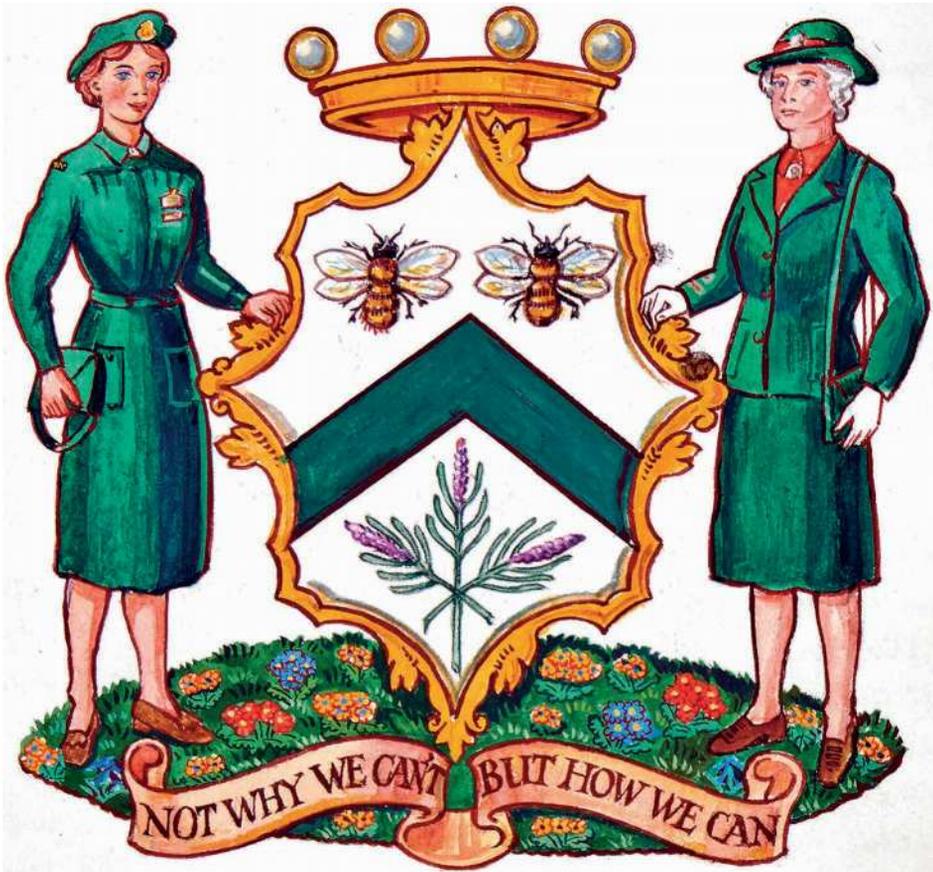


Figure 3: Baroness Swanborough (1959), CA MS Grants 121/224. This and subsequent images from CA MS Grants reproduced by gracious permission of the Kings, Heralds and Pursuivants of Arms.

defence welfare (sinister) uniforms from which the colour of the chevron is taken. She sometimes wore the WVS uniform to Parliament. The bees reflect the WVS members' hard work and readiness to serve the community selflessly. Rosemary was a symbol of the WVS. According to Swanborough it thrived best when given and not received and had feminine qualities: it was used in cooking, in women's hair, and had a pleasant scent. The flowers on the compartment represent her love of gardening.¹² Her motto '*Not why we can't but how we can*' reflected the WVS's philosophy and is significant as mottoes were not usually included in women's grants of arms.¹³

Katharine Elliott (1903–93) was also following her husband into Parliament, but had been a Roxburghshire councillor, a senior Conservative Party official, and a United

¹² WRVSA&HC/WRVS/HQ/CN/CN-1959/Facsimile Coat of Arms and letter from Baroness Swanborough, Life Peerage, May 1959, Royal Voluntary Service Archive and Heritage Collection.

¹³ Cyril Hankinson, *My Forty Years with Debrett* (London, 1963), p. 199.

THE COAT OF ARMS

Nations delegate. In 1958 she stood in the Glasgow Kelvingrove by-election to succeed her late husband Walter Elliot. Her father was Liberal MP Sir Charles Tennant, and when Katharine was five her brother-in-law Herbert Asquith became prime minister; this unusual situation was possible as Tennant had fathered sixteen children over 54 years. One of Katharine's early memories was of throwing a teddy bear at Suffragettes from the window of 10 Downing Street, though as far back as 1880 Tennant, one of Scotland's richest men, was sympathetic to the idea of women MPs.¹⁴ Elliot declined a ministerial appointment but became the first woman peer to speak in Parliament and to co-sponsor a successful private member's bill, with Margaret Thatcher.

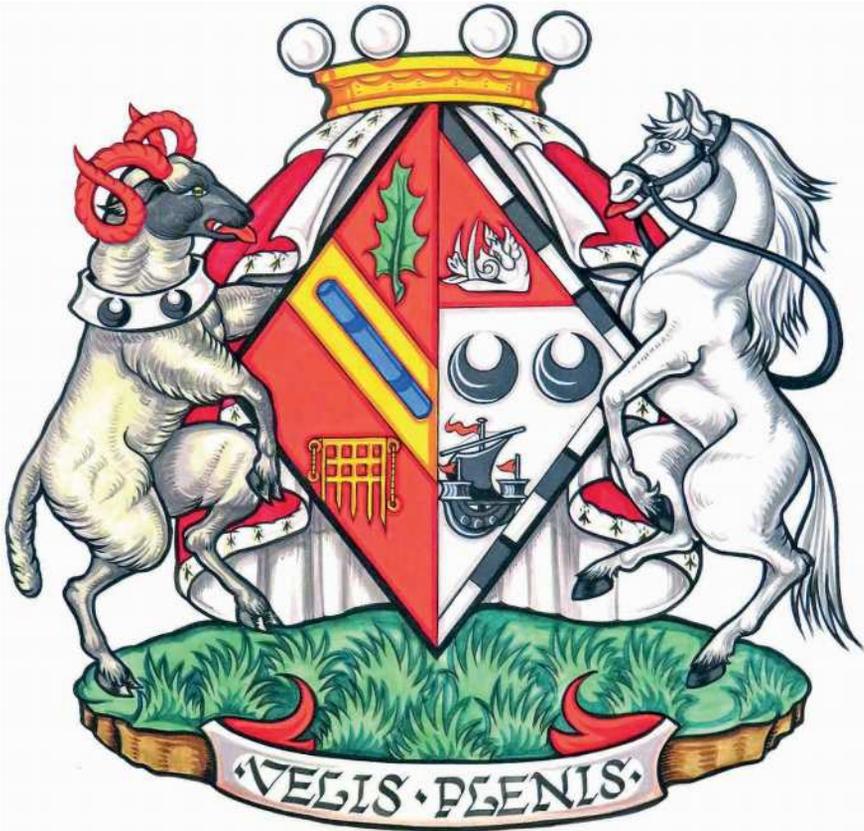


Figure 4: Baroness Elliot of Harwood (1963), image courtesy the Court of the Lord Lyon

Tennant had received arms from Lord Lyon in 1885.¹⁵ Katharine bore these and impaled them with arms posthumously granted at her behest in 1962 to her late husband and to other descendants of his grandfather (Figure 4). Her motto '*Velis plenis*' ('With

¹⁴ Nancy Crathorne, *Tennant's Stalk: The Story of the Tennants of the Glen* (London, 1973), pp. 215, 220.

¹⁵ Fox-Davies AF (1902), p. 1236.

WOMEN PARLIAMENTARIANS



Figure 5: Baroness Hornsby-Smith (1984), CA MS Grants 147/177.

full sails') alludes to her father's crest of a sail and the family motto, 'God fills my sails'. The *wand azure* was a charge used by many Elliots, the holly leaf represented the Elliots of Hollybush near Galashiels (his branch of the family), and the portcullis signifies his forty-year parliamentary career. She was granted her own supporters, *a black-faced ram proper horned gules*, and *a horse argent*, symbolising her love of rural life. Elliot raised sheep at her 5000-acre Roxburghshire farm and was a good rider and serious farmer, receiving a tractor as a wedding gift from tenants.¹⁶ While women's arms do not include helmets and mantling, this type of mantle with the ermine of estate was used by women in the Middle Ages.¹⁷

After these first appointments, several women peers of the 1950s to 1970s were former MPs. Patricia Hornsby-Smith (1914–85) was a Barnes borough councillor, one of the Conservative Party's most popular speakers, and was elected MP for Chislehurst in

¹⁶ W.D. Rubenstein, *The Harvester Biographical Dictionary of Life Peers* (London, 1991), p. 10; Lord Crathorne, 'Baroness Elliot of Harwood, 1903–1993', *The House Magazine* (24 January 1994), 19.

¹⁷ Colin Forrester, 'The Independent rights of married women in the Law of Arms', *CoA*, no.99 (Autumn 1976), p. 74–75.

THE COAT OF ARMS

1950. She became the youngest woman minister and youngest woman privy councillor, spent over a year as the only woman in the Churchill-Eden governments, and was the first female Home Office minister.¹⁸ After boundaries were redrawn 70 percent of her seat went into the Sidcup constituency, but neighbouring MP Edward Heath wanted it, so she stood aside in 1974. This prompted one wag to quip that ‘the gentleman did not offer his seat to the lady who was standing’.¹⁹ After the election she became a peer and received arms in 1984.

Her arms feature charges which could be seen as traditionally masculine (**Figure 5**). The parachute with a container of supplies represents her wartime role as private secretary to the Minister for Economic Warfare, who oversaw the Special Operations Executive. After the war she joined the Special Forces Club for former SOE personnel, which included a number of women. The fishing trawler probably alludes to the Portsmouth Harbour board, one of several bodies of which she was a director for many years.²⁰ The *horses argent* may be the symbol of Kent, for Chislehurst, and her swans are probably taken from the badge of Richmond County School where she became interested in politics and debating before leaving school aged sixteen.

Her fellow Conservative Evelyn Emmet (1899–1980) was a London county councillor and the LCC’s youngest committee chairman aged twenty-six, called ‘London’s housekeeper’ as she oversaw purchasing and supplies. In 1952 she became Britain’s first female United Nations representative, alongside four ministers.²¹ Her father had been a League of Nations delegate and Evelyn, who spoke four languages, worked as his secretary when he was Ambassador to Italy. In 1955 she became Conservative MP for East Grinstead and was on the party’s liberal wing, supporting Common Market membership and the decriminalisation of homosexuality, and opposing capital punishment, which got her booed off stage at a Conservative women’s conference. She promoted the role of women in the party and also espoused equal pay, higher widows’ pensions and separate taxation for married women.²²

In 1964 Emmet became the first woman introduced in the Lords by her brother and had arms granted in 1966 (**Figure 6**).²³ Her husband Thomas Emmet’s family had used arms not properly granted, based on those of other Emmets, and the ermine fesse and bull’s head caboshed came from these, although coincidentally she did raise cattle.²⁴ The trefoils are from the arms of her father, Lord Rennell.²⁵ The port between two towers represents Amberley Castle in Sussex, which Thomas Emmet bought in 1925 and became part of her title, Baroness Emmet of Amberley. Its fortifications and great hall were built by a fourteenth-century Bishop of Chichester. After Thomas’s death in 1934

¹⁸ Helen Jones, ‘(Margaret) Patricia Hornsby-Smith (1914–84)’ *New DNB*.

¹⁹ ‘Baroness Hornsby-Smith’, *Daily Telegraph*, 4 July 1985.

²⁰ Correspondence with Michael Hornsby-Smith, 2017.

²¹ ‘Baroness Emmet of Amberley’, *Daily Telegraph*, 11 October 1980.

²² G.E. Maguire, ‘Evelyn Violet Elizabeth Emmet [née Rodd] (1899–1980)’, *New DNB*; ‘A woman MP booed off by women’, *Daily Mail*, 13 June 1956.

²³ ‘Life in the Lords’, *East Grinstead Observer*, 14 July 1966.

²⁴ CA MS Grants 129/213–14; Papworth, vol. 2, p. 766; Rubenstein, op. cit. p. 51.

²⁵ *Burke’s* (1963), p.2048.

WOMEN PARLIAMENTARIANS

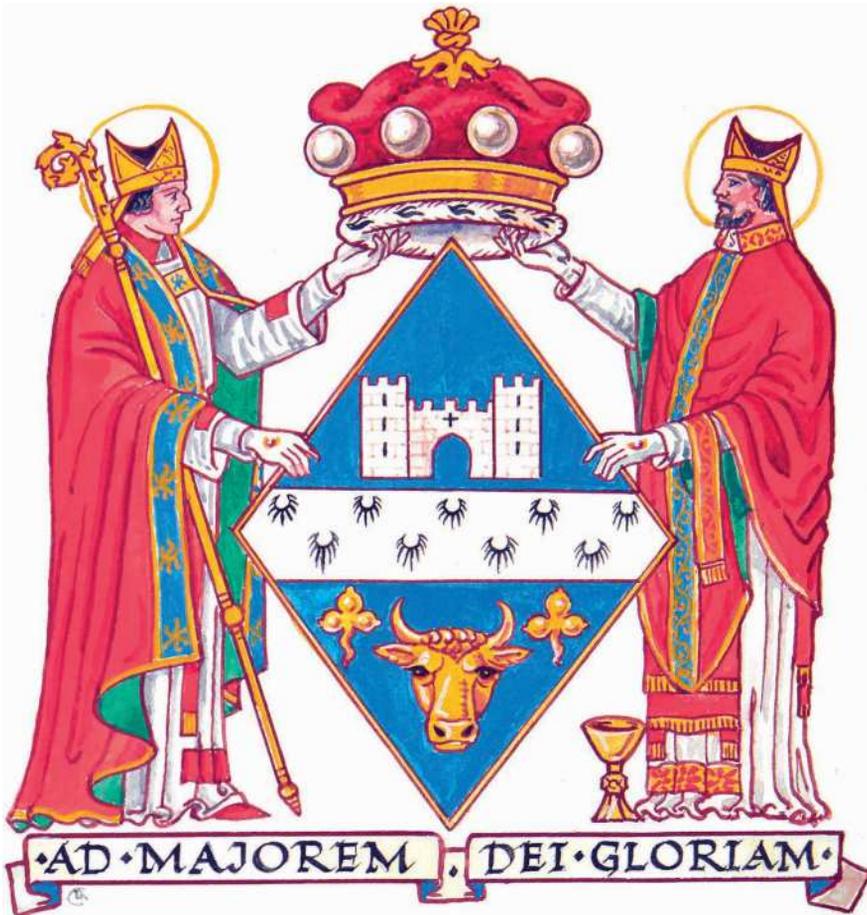


Figure 6: Baroness Emmet of Amberley (1966), CA MS Grants 129/213.

she continued its restoration and died there in 1980.²⁶ In keeping with the castle's former episcopal connection, the supporters are historic ecclesiastical figures: the thirteenth-century St Richard of Chichester, patron saint of the county (sinister); and St Wilfrid, who converted Sussex (dexter).²⁷

Another woman whose political career began on London County Council was Joan Vickers (1907–94). Family friend Winston Churchill had directed her towards local government instead of Parliament, advising her that if she wore a pretty hat and sat there, she would get her way.²⁸ A children's nurse and welfare worker, she was MP for

²⁶ 'The £2m castle that was built by a bishop', *The Times*, 27 April 1988; 'Baroness Emmet of Amberley', *The Times*, 13 October 1980.

²⁷ E. Noel Staines, *Dear Amberley: A Guide to Amberley and History of the Parish* (West Chiltington 1969), p. 50.

²⁸ 'Baroness Vickers', *The Times*, 25 May 1994.

THE COAT OF ARMS

Plymouth Devonport between 1955 and 1974. Devonport housed a major naval yard and she won cross-party respect for her expertise on defence issues.²⁹ She also championed women's issues: her bill helping 70,000 deserted wives by deducting overdue maintenance payments from their husbands' wages attracted hate mail but was adopted by the government and passed.³⁰ And as president of the Society for Cued Speech she was largely responsible for the introduction of sign language at party conferences.³¹

After becoming Baroness Vickers in 1975 she had arms posthumously granted to her father and his descendants and received her own supporters (**Figure 7**). Conservative azure was a colour she wore in her suits and rinsed into her hair. She was a talented equestrian but the *horses argent* represent the chalk horse in Pewsey, where she lived in later years, and the *pile argent* forms a V for Vickers. The ship frame (from the arms of Devonport) and the welder symbolise Devonport's ship-building industry which she championed.³² The sinister supporter recalls her wartime and post-war Red Cross activity which included assisting refugees, organizing child evacuees and managing communal kitchens.³³ After losing in Poplar in the 1945 election she went to India to process former POWs from the Far East then led the Indonesian Red Cross. Vickers' work was recognised with a Dutch Red Cross medal and the MBE.³⁴

One other armigerous MP of the 1950s was Mervyn Pike (1918–2004), a Yorkshire county councillor elected Conservative MP for Melton Mowbray in 1956. She became Assistant Postmaster General and in Opposition did much to develop party policy as head of Conservative Research Systems. Pike appeared in the first all-women party political broadcast, in 1966, and was the first MP to have a computer in her Westminster office. In 1974 she retired as an MP, joining the Lords and becoming chairman of what was by then the Women's Royal Voluntary Service.³⁵

In 1983 her brother Claude Pike petitioned for posthumous arms for their father Ivan and his descendants (**Figure 8**). These bore a Castleford teapot, as Ivan had been managing director of a pottery company, and a churchwarden's staff, as Claude was a churchwarden in Devon.³⁶ The teapot was also appropriate for Mervyn, who was born in Castleford, and had been managing director of her father's company. Baroness Pike obtained supporters in 1984. The foxes represent Leicestershire, the birthplace of foxhunting, which has a fox on the county council's arms. They each stand on a portcullis for Parliament, and wear collars of ivy and rosemary, symbols of steadfastness, friendship and remembrance, and of the WRVS.

²⁹ Patrick Cosgrave, 'Joan Helen Vickers (1907–1994)', *New DNB*.

³⁰ 'Deserted wives to get maintenance charter', *Daily Mail*, 2 March 1957.

³¹ Mary Stott, 'Liberty, equality and fifty years' hard work', *The Guardian*, 26 May 1994; Cheryl Law, *Women: A Political Dictionary* (London 2000), p. 151; Patrick Cosgrave, 'Baroness Vickers', *The Independent*, 24 May 1994.

³² Correspondence with Hugo Vickers, 2017.

³³ 'South Poplar Conservatives – Miss Joan Vickers to stand', *East London Advertiser*, 15 June 1945.

³⁴ 'Baroness Vickers', *The Times*, May 25, 1994; 'Who's who among your candidates', *Western Evening Herald*, 25 May 1955.

³⁵ Duncan Sutherland, 'Mervyn Irene Parnicot Pike (1918–2004)', *New DNB*.

³⁶ Information from John Pike, 2017.

WOMEN PARLIAMENTARIANS

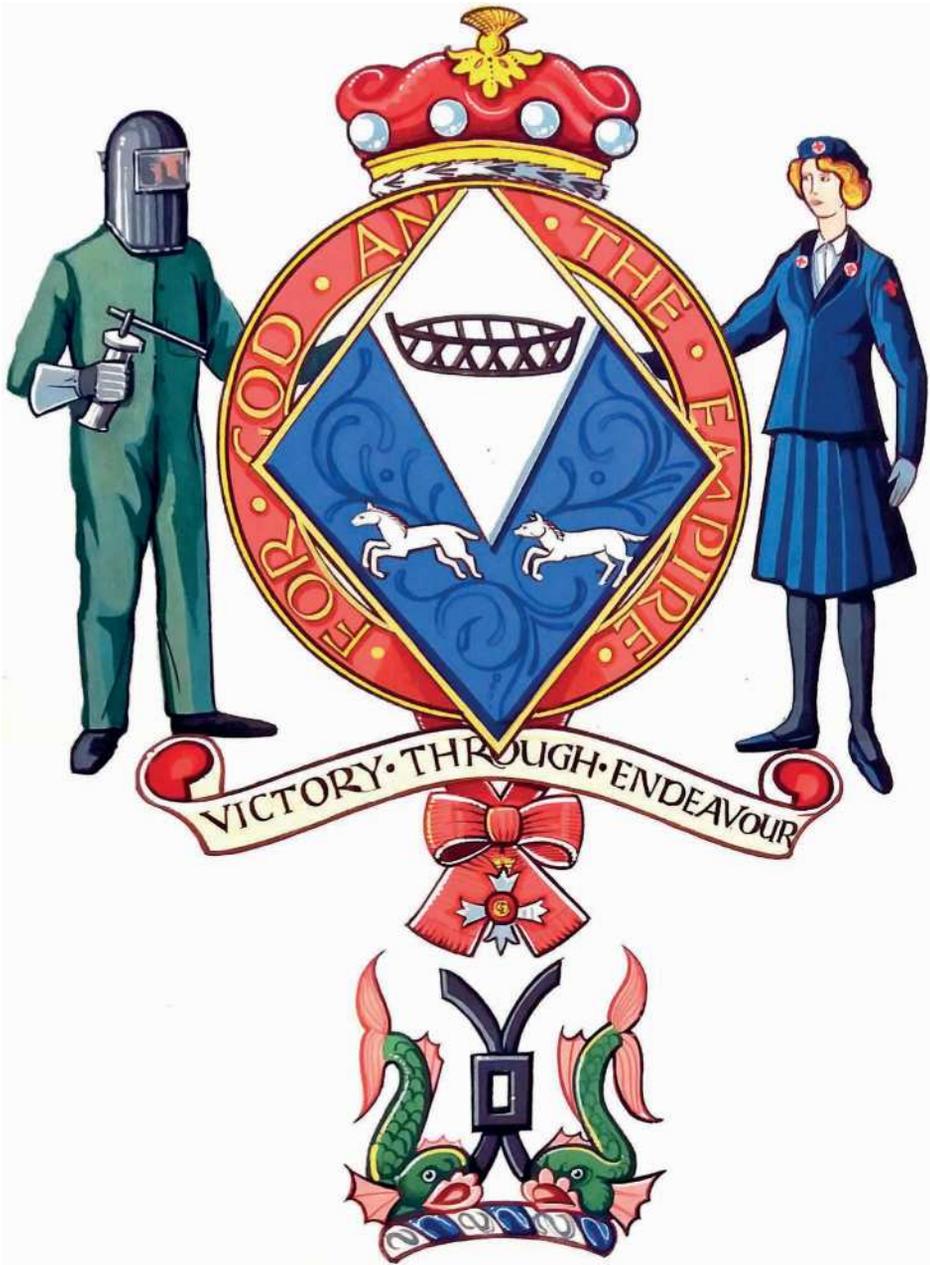


Figure 7: Baroness Vickers (1979), CA MS Grants 143/9. The grant included a crest to be borne by her father's male descendants. The dolphins replicate those used on Devonport council's crest, while the millrind has been used on other Vickerses' arms.

THE COAT OF ARMS

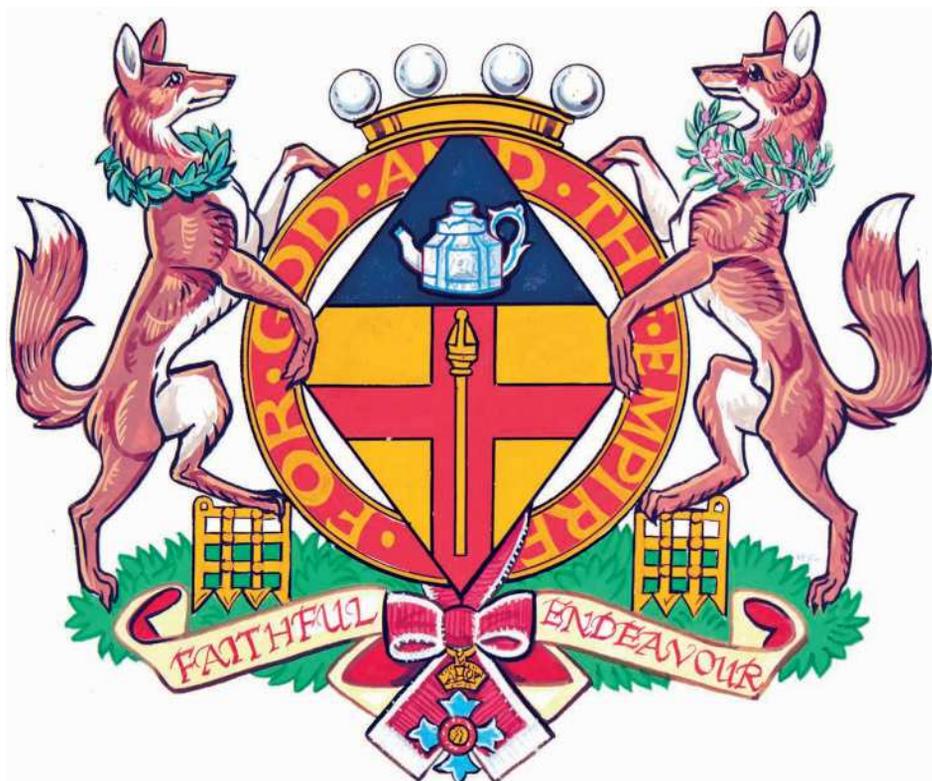


Figure 8: Baroness Pike (supporters assigned 1984), CA MS Grants 147/312.

Also joining the House of Lords in 1974 was Inga-Stina Robson (1919–99), who was a Liberal parliamentary candidate four times between 1955 and 1966. She and her husband hosted Liberal MPs' gatherings at their Oxfordshire home, and as party president in 1970–71 she faced down the party's militant youth wing. Subsequently she succeeded her husband as chairman of the National Liberal Club, and continued his work to reverse years of mismanagement.³⁷

The main charge on her arms is a Viking longboat denoting her Swedish background (**Figure 9**). Born in Stockholm, she moved to London in 1939 to work at the Swedish embassy and settled there after meeting her husband. She felt her unusual status as a foreign-born life peer was a 'fantastic' illustration of Britain's acceptance of outsiders. In four parliamentary campaigns, she was never dismissed for being foreign-born, but was often told women should not meddle in politics.³⁸ Robson was chairman, then president, of the Anglo-Swedish Society, and her arms feature the colours of the Swedish flag. It has two lilies, possibly as her mother's name was Lilly. The sea stag and seahorse

³⁷ Duncan Sutherland, 'Inga-Stina Robson [née Arvidsson] (1919–1999)', *New DNB*.

³⁸ Paul Harris, 'Model English lady dies at 79', *Oxford Mail*, 12 February 1999.

WOMEN PARLIAMENTARIANS

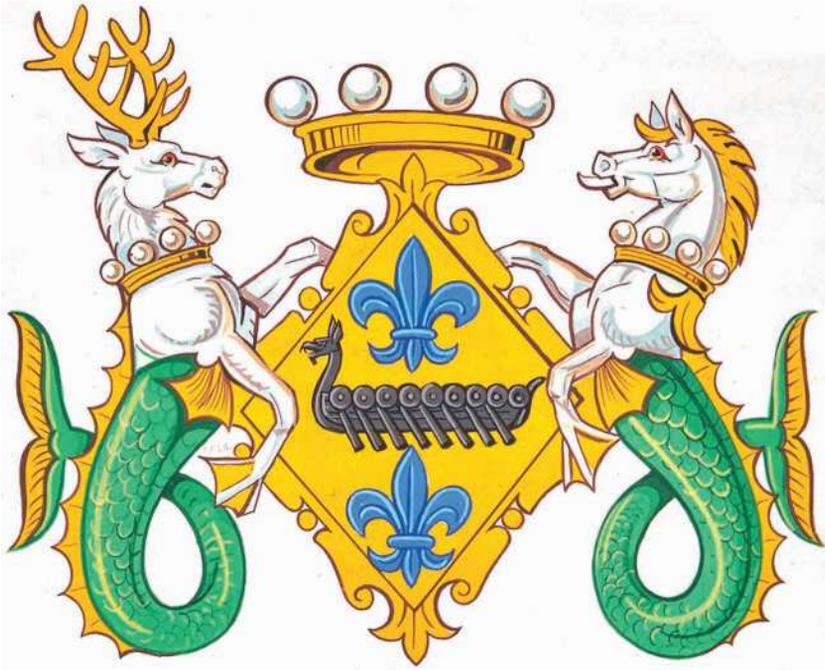


Figure 9: Baroness Robson of Kiddington (1982), CA MS Grants 145/3.

supporters may reflect her love of sailing and fishing and of Scotland, where she and her husband had two Highland estates from the 1960s.³⁹

She was later joined in the Lords by another foreign-born peer, Trixie Gardner, whose family had been active in politics in New South Wales. In the 1920s her father was the state's only Minister of Health and Motherhood, and her uncle was state premier. She and her husband immigrated to Britain in 1955, operated a dental practice, and entered civic politics. Gardner was a Conservative Westminster city and Greater London councillor and twice ran for Parliament. The first Australian woman created a peer, in 1982, Baroness Gardner of Parkes was appointed to the UN Convention on the Status of Women, and for twelve years she chaired Plan International UK.⁴⁰

The rising sun on her arms alludes to Sunrise and Sunray, the houses where she was born and raised in Parkes and Sydney (**Figure 10**). The Southern Cross is a symbol of Australia but here it additionally refers to the Parkes radio telescope which helped broadcast the first moon landing and is situated in her hometown. The indented bordure symbolises her dental career – she has chaired the British Fluoridation Society, served on the UK General Dental Council and promoted public health in Parliament.⁴¹ Her supporters are the Australian and English national animals, each holding the other country's national flower, the rose and golden wattle. New South Wales' state flower, the

³⁹ Correspondence with Vanessa Potter, 2017.

⁴⁰ *Who's Who* (2016), p. 839.

⁴¹ *Dod's Parliamentary Companion* (London 1999), p. 153.

THE COAT OF ARMS

waratah, decorates the compartment. Her motto ‘*Keep going*’ was based on her family philosophy to be persistent, and in her nineties she remains active in Parliament.⁴²

This philosophy similarly applied to Baroness Trumpington (1922–2018), who retired in 2017 aged ninety-five as one of the Second Chamber’s best-known figures. Jean Barker became a land girl on David Lloyd George’s farm in 1939, served at Bletchley Park, as an MP’s secretary, and as Mayor of Cambridge in 1971–72, when she resurrected the historic town market.⁴³ She joined the House of Lords in 1980, after twice unsuccessfully seeking a parliamentary nomination, and would become the oldest-ever female minister.⁴⁴



Figure 10: Baroness Gardner of Parkes (1985), CA MS Grants 147/297.

The hedgehogs on her arms – ‘*hérissons*’ in French – are a pun on her maiden name of Campbell-Harris. The supporters are her husband’s boxer Sheba, as he always had pet boxers, and her son’s colt Master Craftsman (**Figure 11**).⁴⁵ Jean rode and hunted from childhood, was vice president of the League for the Protection of Horses, and the first female steward of Folkestone racecourse.⁴⁶ The French motto meaning ‘Win all with no

⁴² Correspondence with Baroness Gardner of Parkes, 2017.

⁴³ Jean Trumpington, *Coming Up Trumps: A Memoir* (London 2014), p. 189.

⁴⁴ ‘Baroness Trumpington of Sandwich’, *The Times*, 28 November 2018.

⁴⁵ Nicholas Wilde, *Sir Bertie & the Wyvern: A Tale of Heraldry* (London, 1982), foreword.

⁴⁶ Trumpington, pp. 18, 220.

WOMEN PARLIAMENTARIANS

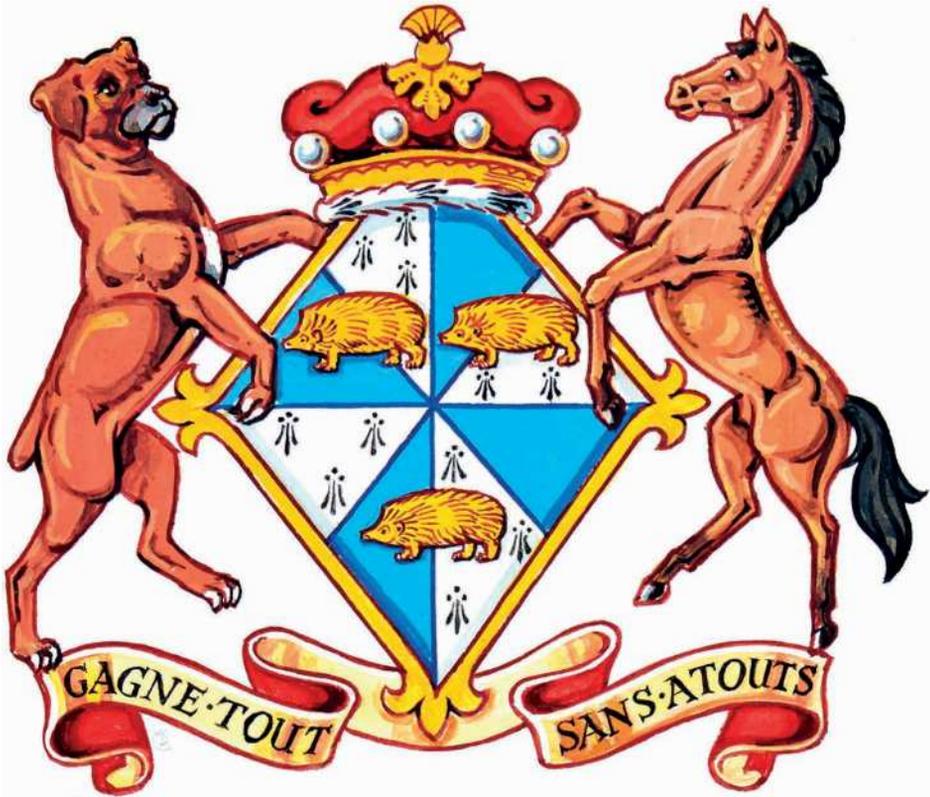


Figure 11: Baroness Trumpington (1981), CA MS Grants 143/329.

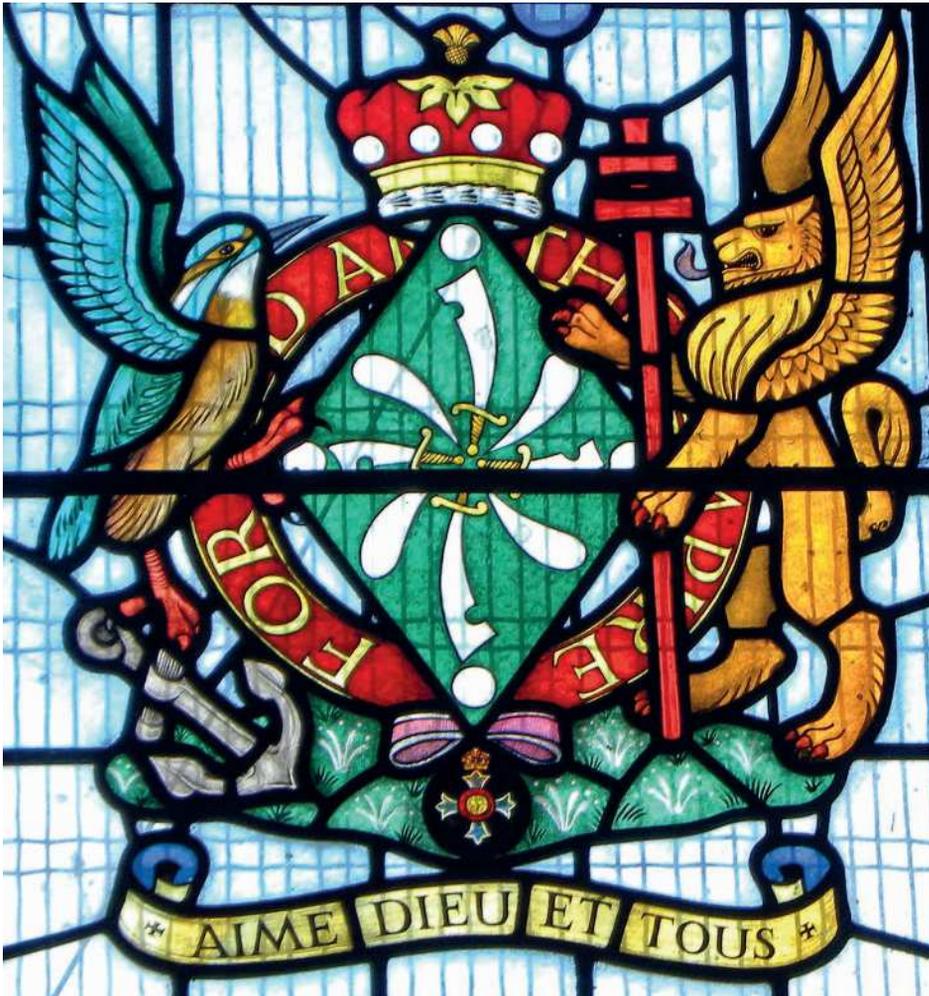
trumps' cants on her title Trumpington, her ward as a Cambridge city councillor, and reflected what she felt she had done in life.⁴⁷

Several women peers created in the 1980s had Cambridge connections. As a student at Girton College, Beryl Platt (1923–2015) read aeronautical engineering so as to help the war effort. She was the ninth-ever woman to read Engineering at Cambridge, though her father had initially opposed her attending university. Only five of the 250 Engineering students matriculating in 1941 were women. After finishing studies two years later, she tested fighter aircraft for Hawker then worked on flight safety for B.E.A. after the war. In 1949 she left work to marry, but entered local government a decade later and eventually chaired Essex County Council's education committee.⁴⁸ She entered the House of Lords in 1981 as Baroness Platt of Writtle and became head of the Equal Opportunities Commission two years later. During this time she launched a campaign

⁴⁷ Trumpington, pp. 197–98.

⁴⁸ 'In conversation with Baroness Platt of Writtle' (BBC Essex interview, 1992), SA 1/942/1, Essex County Record Office.

THE COAT OF ARMS



*Figure 12: Baroness Platt of Writtle's arms (1983) at All Saints' Church.
(Photo by Mr Allan Ellis)*

encouraging young women to pursue careers in science, engineering, construction and mathematics.⁴⁹

Her arms feature seaxes from the arms of Essex County Council alternating with aerofoils, commemorating her career as an aeronautical engineer (**Figure 12**). In the corners are four plates, canting on the name Platt which comes from du Plat. The kingfisher was her favourite bird and the anchor reflects her husband's enthusiasm for sailing, while the winged lion holds a patriarchal cross from the seal of Writtle near Chelmsford, where she lived for decades. The village's many springs are depicted on

⁴⁹ Helen Wollaston, 'Beryl Catherine Platt [née Myatt] (1923–2015)', *New DNB*.

WOMEN PARLIAMENTARIANS

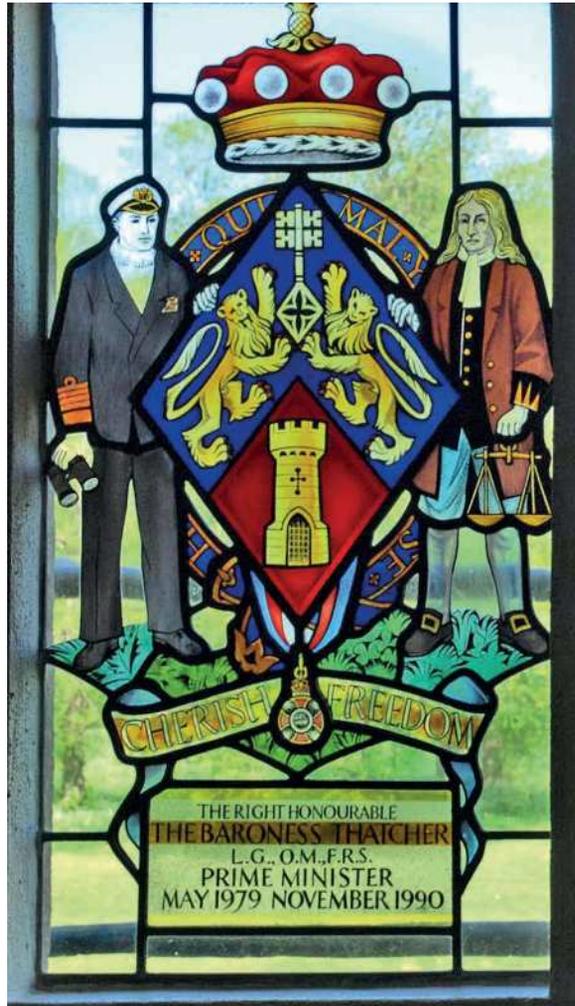


Figure 13: Baroness Thatcher's arms (1992) at Chequers. (Photo by Mr Alfred Fisher).

the compartment. Her motto was '*Aime Dieu et tous*' ('Love God and all').⁵⁰ These arms appear on a stained glass window in Writtle's All Saints' Parish church, dedicated in 1992 to Platt and Guglielmo Marconi who broadcast Britain's first radio transmissions from Writtle in 1922–23.⁵¹

These last three women were ennobled by Margaret Thatcher (1925–2013), who became a peer herself in 1992. She received arms with a double-warded key alluding to the dual post of Prime Minister and First Lord of the Treasury (**Figure 13**). The lions represent England and the tower with a portcullis symbolises Parliament. Her supporters

⁵⁰ Beryl Platt, *A Life of Surprises* (privately published memoir, 2009).

⁵¹ 'The Marconi Commemorative Window', *The Heraldry Gazette* (March 1994), p. 2.

THE COAT OF ARMS

are an Admiral of the Fleet, from the Falklands conflict, and Sir Isaac Newton, who shares her birthplace of Grantham and represents her scientific career. She worked as a research chemist and assembled a collection of busts and paintings of British scientists for 10 Downing Street. The motto '*Cherish freedom*' is a very Thatcherite-sounding sentiment, but the original suggestion, made by a heraldry enthusiast, was '*We that Cherish Freedom*'. This would have canted on her name, but she preferred brevity.

Unsurprisingly these arms generated considerable media interest, and some controversy. Newspapers offered satirical alternative designs, a former First Sea Lord pronounced the admiral's dress inaccurate and two living relatives of Isaac Newton criticised her adoption of Newton as a supporter.⁵² In 1997 the *Independent* reported on its front page that she was using the royal arms instead of her own on her personal stationery.⁵³ Sir Denis Thatcher received arms concurrently and had his engraved on a silver salver, but on cost grounds she declined his repeated offers to buy her a 'big present' engraved with hers.⁵⁴ However they are displayed in St George's chapel, Windsor and at Chequers, while her Garter banner now hangs in the Royal Hospital Chelsea museum.

Shortly after Thatcher left the House of Commons in 1992, MPs elected Betty Boothroyd the first female Speaker. New Speakers receive arms if they are not already armigerous, and like many of her predecessors, her arms feature the House of Commons mace (**Figure 14**). Gules is the colour of the Labour Party and the *rose argent* is a symbol of her native Yorkshire. The millrinds, for industry in the Black Country, are from the arms of West Bromwich, which she represented in Parliament, while the owl appears on the arms of her hometown, Dewsbury, and her alma mater, Dewsbury Technical College. Her motto '*I speak to serve*' refers to the historic office she held. The ribboned bow is traditionally azure but she preferred vert for the House of Commons.⁵⁵ While Margaret Thatcher declined offers of a heraldic gift, Betty Boothroyd uses her arms at home with a heraldic cushion cover and footrest.⁵⁶

After becoming a peer in 2000 she did not obtain supporters. Her arms are displayed in the Speakers' House and the House of Lords, where a staircase displays the arms of Speakers of the Commons who became peers. In 2006 the office of Lord Speaker was established to preside over debates in the Upper House. The first two Lords Speaker were women, Helene Hayman and Frances d'Souza, and space was reserved for their arms in a corridor of the Lords but neither applied for them. Both are instead commemorated by monograms.

⁵² Andy McSmith, 'A coat of arms that fits to a T', *The Guardian*, 20 November 1994; Andrew Malone and Julie Cohen, 'Satire rampant over Thatcher coat of arms', *Sunday Times*, 20 November 1994; Quentin Letts, 'Up in arms over Thatcher's admiral', *Daily Telegraph*, 19 November 1994; 'Newton family up in arms over Thatcher's 'damned cheek'', *Toronto Star*, 28 November 1994.

⁵³ Ben Summers and Michael Streeter, 'The strange case of Mrs Thatcher and Her Majesty's coat of arms', *The Independent*, 24 March 1997.

⁵⁴ Letts, *op. cit.*

⁵⁵ 'Miss Betty Boothroyd the Labour MP is there', *Daily Telegraph*, 30 March 1994; 'Contemporary Heraldry', *The Heraldry Gazette* (September 1994), p. 6.

⁵⁶ York Membry, 'My Haven – Betty Boothroyd', *Daily Mail*, (weekend supplement), 30 May 2015.



Figure 14: Baroness Boothroyd's arms (1993) in the House of Lords.
(Photograph by Mr Robert Harrison).

THE COAT OF ARMS

The only woman to have chaired proceedings in both Houses is Janet Fookes, who has been Deputy Speaker in the Commons and the Lords. She was a Hastings councillor before becoming a Conservative MP from 1970 until 1997, sitting for Merton and Morden and then Plymouth Drake. Excluding a four-year gap, Plymouth always had a woman MP from 1919 until 2015. Fookes successfully introduced two private member's bills, which only five other women MPs have achieved since 1918.⁵⁷ She harboured ambitions to become Speaker but did not stand, instead serving as Deputy Speaker from 1992 until 1997, when she retired and was raised to the peerage.

Her arms have four towers representing Plymouth, whose sixteenth-century arms have four towers around a saltire (**Figure 15**). The fuchsias symbolise her main hobby, gardening. She co-chairs the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Gardening and Horticulture, but the flowers also refer to her name – the fuchsia is named for sixteenth-century botanist Leonhart Fuchs, which is German for Fookes. Her supporters reflect her love of cats and animals. Fookes was chairman of the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals and of the Parliamentary Group for Animal Welfare.⁵⁸ The cats' collars resemble naval crowns, like those worn by the lion supporters on Plymouth council's arms. The motto, meaning 'Put on the full armour of God' is from St Paul's letter to the Ephesians.⁵⁹ As of June 2020 she has been in Parliament for fifty years, the second-longest tenure of any female parliamentarian.

Domestic animals are popular as supporters, also appearing on the arms of Ann Mallalieu and Pauline Perry. Perry had a career in education, including being Chief Inspector of Schools, before becoming the first female director of a polytechnic. As director of South Bank Polytechnic, the second-largest in Britain, she oversaw a doubling of student numbers and its transition to university status in 1992, making her one of the country's few female vice-chancellors.⁶⁰ Subsequently she was president of Lucy Cavendish College, Cambridge. Created Baroness Perry of Southwark in 1991, she spoke often on education, served on the Lords' Science and Technology select committee, and was a Conservative whip.⁶¹

Her arms take a different form from those of other women peers (**Figure 16**). She petitioned for arms and in 1993 they were granted to be borne by her husband George. The pear cants on their surname and the sun in splendour stands for the light of knowledge, as both were educators. The escutcheon of pretence, for her maiden name of Welch, has a cross made of *lozenges gules*, based on the arms of Southwark cathedral where the Perrys worshipped and she was a Rector's Warden. The lozenges have a second meaning as they resemble the shape of women's armorial bearings, while the quaver signifies the Perrys' love of music. Her supporters are the couple's cats, Tiger and Cheeky, holding quill pens as the Perrys were academics. Cheeky stands on a stack of books as Baroness

⁵⁷ House of Commons Information Office, 'The Success of Private Members' Bills', Factsheet L10 (June 2010).

⁵⁸ *Who's Who* (2016), p. 789.

⁵⁹ Correspondence with Baroness Fookes, 2017.

⁶⁰ Pauline Perry on Radio 4 Woman's Hour (25 March 1987), B1685/1, British Library.

⁶¹ *Who's Who* (2016), p. 1823.

WOMEN PARLIAMENTARIANS



Figure 15: Baroness Fookes (1998), CA MS Grants 164/93.

Perry was notably shorter than her husband.⁶² Her motto means ‘The handmaid of the Lord’.

Ann Mallalieu was another trailblazer, elected the Cambridge Union’s first female president in 1967. Her achievement was honoured with a lunch hosted by the Lord Chancellor and she addressed the women’s suffrage golden jubilee celebration in 1968.⁶³ After graduating in Law she became a recorder then a QC and was often led by John Mortimer, who based his Rumpole character Phyllida Trant on her. She twice stood

⁶² Interview with Baroness Perry of Southwark, 2017.

⁶³ ‘Formidable launching’, *The Times*, 28 July 1967; ‘Votes for Women Jubilee’, *Daily Telegraph*, 5 January 1968.

THE COAT OF ARMS

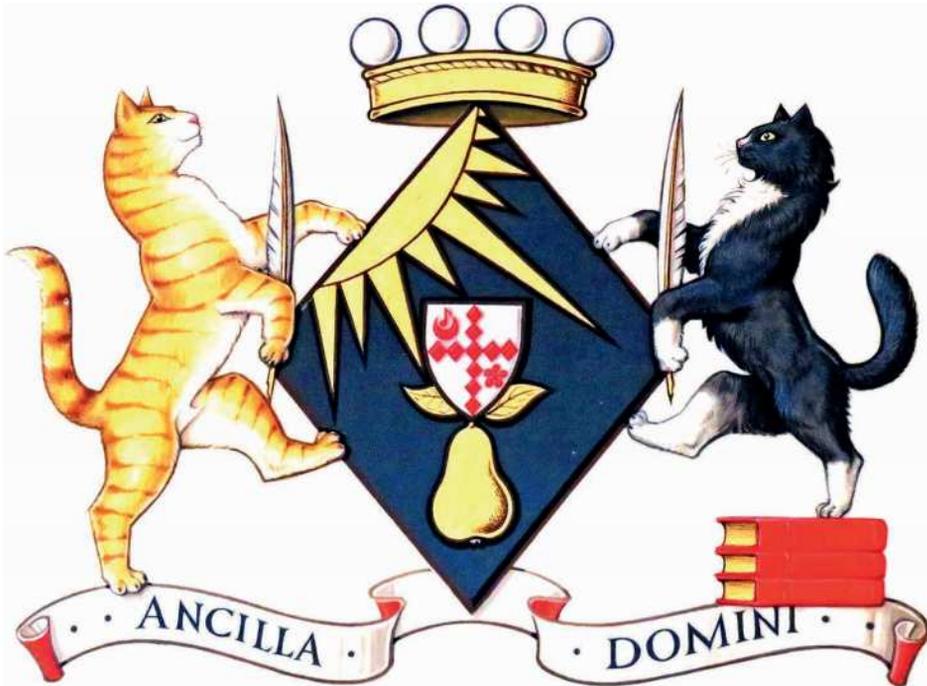


Figure 16: Baroness Perry of Southwark (1993). Photograph by the author.

for Parliament, following a family tradition: her mother was a local councillor and her grandfather, father and uncle were Yorkshire MPs.⁶⁴

The arms and motto she uses (**Figure 17**) were granted in 1920 to her grandfather Frederick Mallalieu, MP for Colne Valley, which was then part of Yorkshire, represented by the *rose argent*.⁶⁵ The fleurs-de-lys may refer to the family's Huguenot ancestry. The motto meaning 'Evil to him who speaks evil' cants on the family name. After becoming a Labour peer in 1991 Mallalieu added supporters. The *horse argent* is the symbol of Inner Temple, her inn of court, but she also keeps horses on her farm, and is involved with equine charities. The foxhound reflects her involvement with country sports; she first hunted aged ten, and as president of the Countryside Alliance was a leading defender of foxhunting, earning Peer of the Year from *The House* and *Spectator* magazines.⁶⁶ Their neckerchiefs include azure for Cambridge and each stands on a field of stubble with hedgerows and a stile or gate.⁶⁷

⁶⁴ Martyn Harris, 'Straight from the QC's mouth', *Daily Telegraph*, 23 March 1994; Katharine Whitehorn, 'Women's Votes for Women?', *The Guardian*, 17 February 1974.

⁶⁵ Fox-Davies AF (1929), p. 1298.

⁶⁶ Robert Hardman, 'Labour lone ranger rides with the Tories', *Daily Telegraph*, 17 June 1991.

⁶⁷ Correspondence with Baroness Mallalieu, 2017.

WOMEN PARLIAMENTARIANS

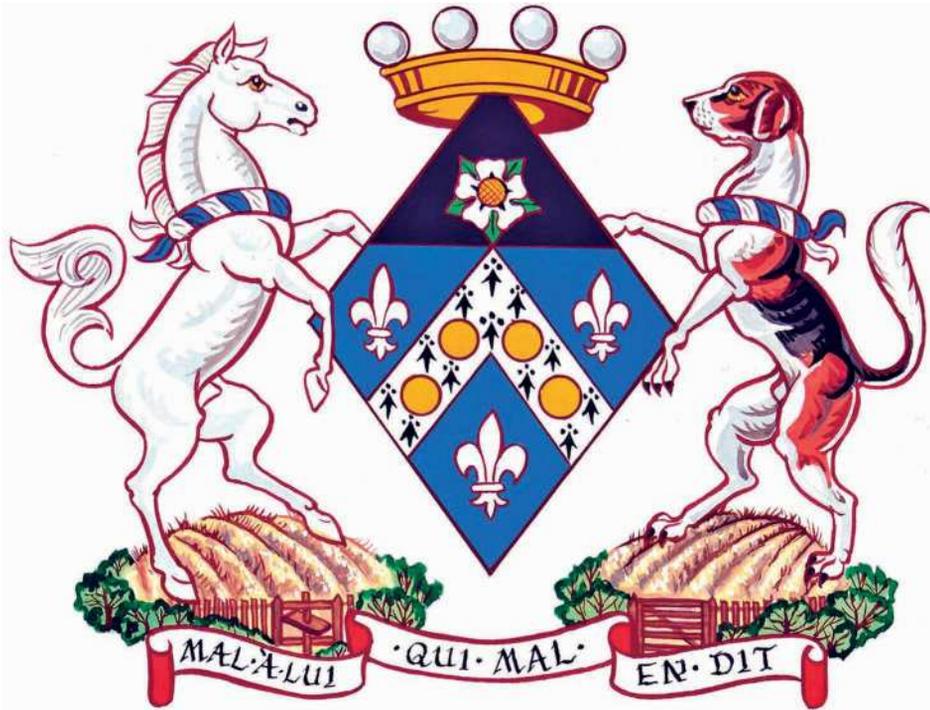


Figure 17: Baroness Mallalieu (supporters assigned 1992), CA MS Grants 158/79.

The countryside is also evoked on the arms of Gillian Shephard, who held multiple portfolios in the 1980s and 1990s, including being the first Minister for Women while she was Secretary of State for Employment (**Figure 18**). Her supporters are hares, as Breckland in her former Norfolk constituency is known for its numerous hares. Shephard was a defender of rural communities and has had a close association with agriculture, as Secretary for Agriculture (where she established a farmers' helpline and promoted non-food crops) and president of the Norfolk Agricultural Society.⁶⁸ This interest in agriculture is reflected on her arms by ears of barley, and the azure colour of the field and the supporters stands for the Conservative Party.⁶⁹

The Conservatives' long spell in power ended at the 1997 election, which saw a record number of women enter the Commons and subsequently many more appointed to the Lords. Among these is one of the few armigerous women life peers from Scotland, Baroness Linklater of Butterstone. Veronica Linklater worked for various organizations dealing with children, education and prisoners' welfare. In 1991 she founded The New School at Butterstone near Perth, for children with multiple mild difficulties who were

⁶⁸ Interview with Gillian Shephard (29 June 2004), Harman-Shephard interviews with women Members of Parliament, British Library, C1182/74/01.

⁶⁹ Peter Gwynne-Jones, 'Heraldry of New Life Peers', *The Heraldry Gazette*, (June 2006), p. 7; Correspondence with Baroness Shephard of Northwold, 2017.

THE COAT OF ARMS



Figure 18: Baroness Shephard of Northwold (2005), CA MS Grants 171/56.

not served either by mainstream schools or by institutions for the severely disabled.⁷⁰ She stood for the Liberal Democrats in the 1995 Perth by-election and was created a peer in 1997, taking a special interest in debates on children and education.

In 1999 Lord Lyon granted her arms of a galley based on those of her great-grandfather, ship-owner Sir Archibald Lyle (**Figure 19**). His crest was a *cock Or* which she uses as a supporter, and ‘*An I may*’ is the Lyle motto. The sheldrake is a symbol of her husband’s family, the Linklaters. Her maternal grandfather, former Liberal Party leader Sir Archibald Sinclair, also bore arms, featuring a crest of a star with six rays waved. She has combined this with a book to represent The New School.⁷¹ This is the only crest in this survey, as Lyon Court allows women to use them.

⁷⁰ Veronica Linklater, ‘A beacon in the mist’, *Daily Telegraph*, 4 July 1992.

⁷¹ Magnus Linklater, ‘Why we fell for a coat of arms’, *The Times*, 23 June 1999; Correspondence with Baroness Linklater of Butterstone, 2017.

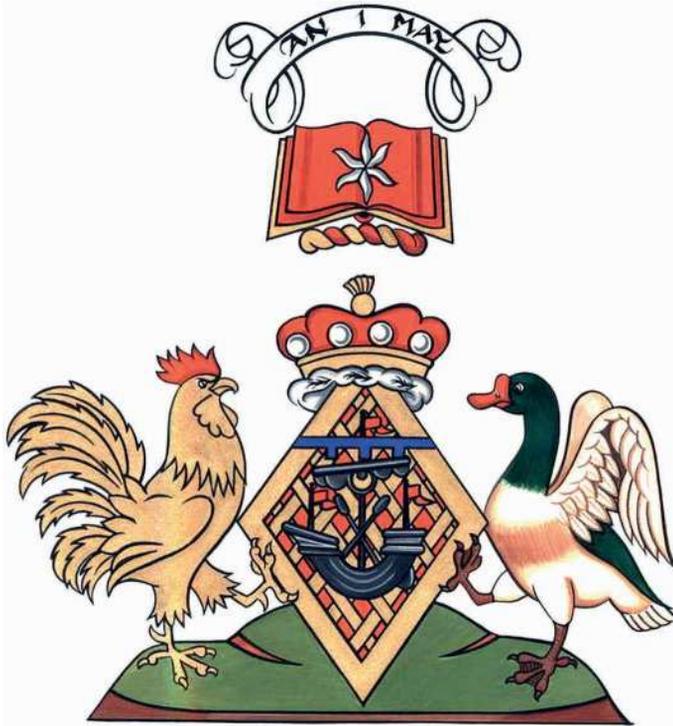


Figure 19: Baroness Linklater of Butterstone (1999), image courtesy of the Court of the Lord Lyon.

As well as Scottish armigerous women peers, there is one each from Wales and Northern Ireland. Northern Ireland only elected its first woman MP in 1953, then had none for almost fifty years. The Democratic Unionist Party became Northern Ireland's largest party at Westminster in 2005 and the following year Eileen Paisley, wife of party founder Ian Paisley, was appointed one of its first three peers. Her political career began in 1966 when she stood in a civic by-election while her husband was in prison and she was pregnant with twins. Paisley lost but was the only Protestant Unionist Party candidate elected to Belfast Corporation the following year. In 1973 she left the council to become one of just four women elected to the short-lived Northern Ireland Assembly.⁷² She worked in her husband's office, helping to write speeches, and undertook an American speaking tour on his behalf when he was denied entry.⁷³ In the Lords she was a voice for traditional values, and retired in 2017.

The five mural crowns on her arms are a pun on her maiden name, Cassells, and there is one for each of the Paisleys' five children (**Figure 20**). Two of them followed

⁷² 'Labour lose heavily in Belfast election', *Irish Times*, 18 May 1967; Fionnuala O'Connor, 'The Assembly Women', *Irish Times*, 14 July 1973.

⁷³ Paul Pickering, 'The Boss behind Honeybunch', *The Times*, 15 April 1983.

THE COAT OF ARMS

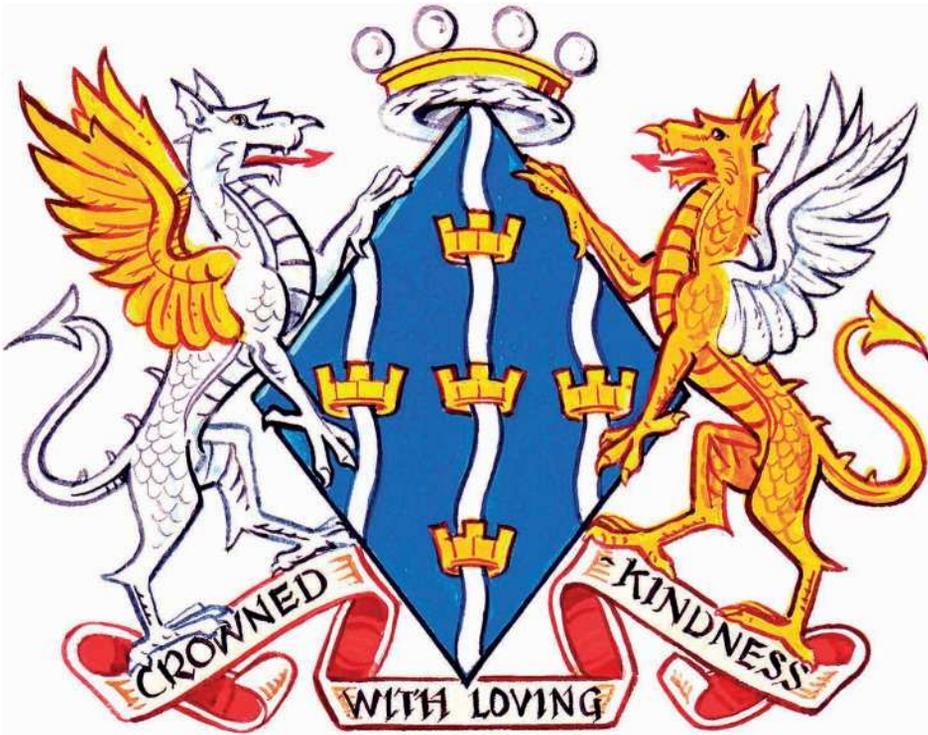


Figure 20: Baroness Paisley of St George's (2006), CA MS Ulster Grants 4/215.

their parents into civic or parliamentary politics. The wavy pallets represent rivers and the dragons are an allusion to St George, as she was elected to Belfast Corporation for St George's ward and took the title of Baroness Paisley of St George's. Her motto 'Crowned with loving kindness' is based on Psalm 103.⁷⁴

From Wales, Ilora Finlay was the University of Cardiff's first Professor of Palliative Medicine and established its Master's program in Palliative Care. She has been president of the Royal Society of Medicine and the British Medical Association, is a vice president of Marie Curie Cancer Care (where she has worked for many years) and promoted the growth of hospice care in Wales.⁷⁵ After treating a peer as a patient she was inspired to apply to the House of Lords Appointments Commission and became a Crossbench peer in 2001. In Parliament she was a driving force behind the ban on smoking in public, as well as the creation of a Chief Coroner, and she promoted a change in organ donor laws.⁷⁶

Finlay's shield is *gyronny sable and azure*, in ordinary parlance black and blue, colours associated with pain (**Figure 21**). The mullet and roundel invected of eight

⁷⁴ Peter Gwynne-Jones, 'Heraldry of New Life Peers', *The Heraldry Gazette* (June 2007), p. 2; Correspondence with Baroness Paisley of St George's, 2017.

⁷⁵ 'My Working Day: Ilora Finlay', *Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine*, 102/8 (1 August 2009), 349–51.

⁷⁶ Edward Davie, 'The Sister of Mercy', *The House Magazine* (28 April 2008).

WOMEN PARLIAMENTARIANS



Figure 21: Baroness Finlay of Llandaff (2005), CA MS Grants 171/77.

points resemble a poppy seed case, as morphine is used in pain relief, while the colours gules and argent evoke the Polish flag, to honour her Polish maternal grandparents. Her grandmother provides another connection to Marie Curie as both women were awarded Polish Student of the Year, twenty-eight years apart.⁷⁷ The supporters further allude to healing, as unicorn horns were once believed to be a cure-all, and the motto means ‘To advance through charity’.⁷⁸

Another medical professional in the Lords, though one who appeared on arms rather than received them, was June Lloyd (1928–2006). She was a long-time Paediatrics professor who played a crucial role in founding the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health in 1996. Her role was acknowledged when the college received arms and she was chosen as a supporter along with Thomas Faire, author of the first English book on paediatrics (**Figure 22**). Lloyd holds a staff of Aesculapius, intertwined with a double helix instead of a serpent, reflecting the importance of science. Unfortunately

⁷⁷ Ros Drinkwater, ‘Dr Finlay’s casebook’, *The Times*, 25 October 1996.

⁷⁸ Peter Gwynne-Jones, ‘Heraldry of New Life Peers’, *The Heraldry Gazette* (June 2006), p. 6; Correspondence with Baroness Finlay of Llandaff, 2017.

THE COAT OF ARMS

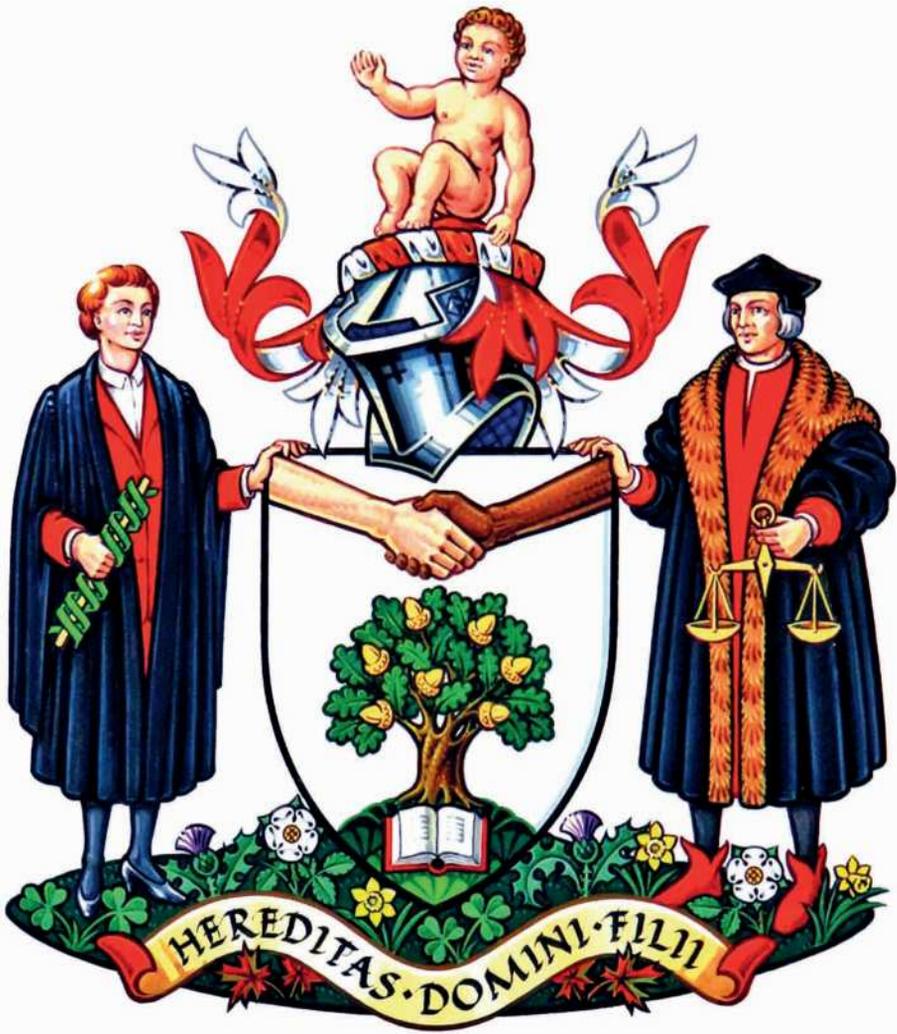


Figure 22: Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health (1997). Photograph by the author.

her elevation to the peerage as Baroness Lloyd of Highbury coincided with the onset of health problems, and she never played an active role in Parliament.⁷⁹

One final example of human supporters is found in the arms of Doreen Miller (1933–2014). The founder of a successful mail-order cosmetics business, Universal Beauty, she spent ten years seeking a Conservative nomination in over ninety seats. Miller reflected that for constituency associations, women candidates were like mental hospitals and prisons – everyone agreed more were needed as long as they were somewhere else.⁸⁰

⁷⁹ 'Baroness Lloyd of Highbury', *The Times*, 10 July 2006.

⁸⁰ Charles Nevin, 'House of few women', *Daily Telegraph*, 10 September 1986.

WOMEN PARLIAMENTARIANS

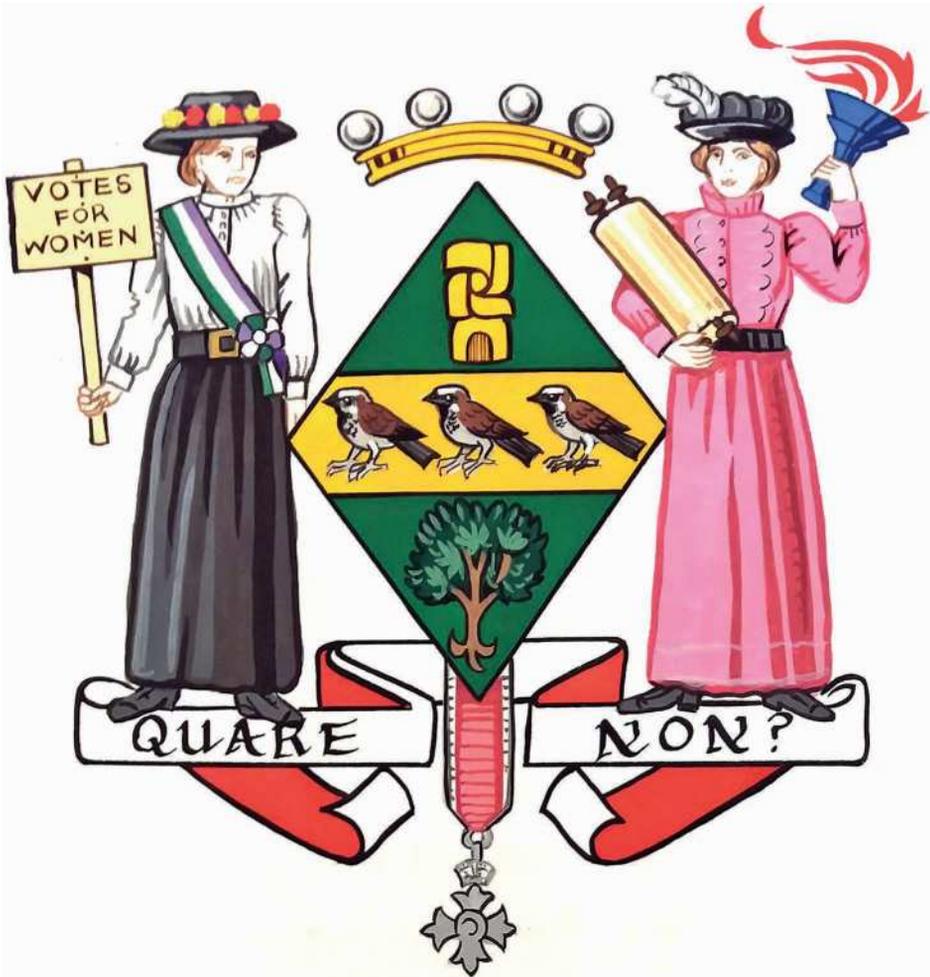


Figure 23: Baroness Miller of Hendon (1997), CA MS Grants 161/102.

She chaired the all-party 300 Group which sought to elect more women MPs, did much to encourage women candidates, and finally entered Parliament as Baroness Miller of Hendon in 1993. She became a government whip and sought the Conservative nomination for Mayor of London in 2000.⁸¹

Her arms have a *field vert* for her maiden name, Feldman, and the tree acknowledges her family's association with the furniture and timber trade through her father's side (Figure 23). There are three sparrows for her mother's name, Spatz, meaning sparrow in German, and the mill cants on her married name, while its sails resemble Universal Beauty's logo of a four-petalled flower. Her motto meaning 'Why not?' captured her attitude towards business, politics and life but the highlight of these arms is the supporters.

⁸¹ 'Baroness Miller of Hendon', *Daily Telegraph* (22 July 2014).

THE COAT OF ARMS

The dexter supporter is a Suffragette wearing a WSPU sash, and the sinister supporter carries the Conservative Party torch and a torah. This is another feminist statement, since women do not carry the Torah in Orthodox Judaism, and Miller felt this was wrong.⁸² As this study was undertaken to commemorate the anniversaries of women's admission to the House of Lords and their enfranchisement, these arms honouring the early campaigners for political equality provide a fitting note on which to conclude.

⁸² Jan Shure, 'Arms and the (New) Woman', *Jewish Chronicle*, 3 November 1995; Correspondence with Mycal Miller, 2017.

The Heraldry Society is an educational charity. Its purpose is to promote greater understanding and appreciation of heraldry and its related subjects. The society organises lectures, study days, congresses, dinners and other social activities. It offers a course in heraldry leading to examination for a diploma. It publishes a range of source material at modest cost. Members receive the *Coat of Arms* and the quarterly *Heraldry Gazette*.

Help to support our work and participate in our social activities by joining today via our website www.theheraldrysociety.com

Registered office

53 Hitchin Street, Baldock, Hertfordshire SG7 6AQ

The Society was registered in England in 1956 as registered charity no. 241456.

The Coat of Arms is a non commercial, non profit making academic journal. Advertising space is sold in order to subsidise the cost of printing. The contents of this journal will be made freely available to all online via the Heraldry Society website one year following distribution of paper copy to members. Images may be subject to copyright, and should not be reproduced without permission of the originator.

President

His Grace The Duke of Norfolk, Earl Marshal

Honorary Secretary

John Tunesi of Liongam

e-mail: honsecheraldrysociety@googlemail.com

Membership Secretary

Jane Tunesi of Liongam

e-mail: membership@theheraldrysociety.com

Material appearing in *The Coat of Arms* does not necessarily represent the views of the Honorary Editor, of the Editorial Panel, or of the Society.

Printed in Bristol by 4Word Ltd.

©The Heraldry Society

ISSN 0010-003X

ISSN 2634-1182 Online version

THE COAT OF ARMS

The journal of the Heraldry Society



Fourth Series

Volume III

2020

Number 237 in the original series started in 1952