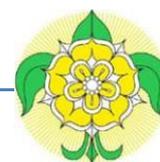


Bacon Heraldry



The heraldic coat of arms of Sir Nicholas Bacon, Lord Keeper of the Great Seal, and of Sir Francis Bacon, Viscount St Alban, Lord Chancellor.

Author: Peter Dawkins

Sir Nicholas Bacon, Lord Keeper of the Great Seal

On 22 February 1568 a grant of a coat of arms was made to Sir Nicholas Bacon by G. Dethick, Garter Principal King of Arms. An extract from *Betham's Baronetage of England* states that:

"... we do find the said SIR NICHOLAS BACON Kt. is the second son of Robert Bacon late of Drinkston, in the said county of Suffolk, Gent, which Robert was son and heir of John Bacon, son and heir of John Bacon, son and heir of Walter Bacon of Drinkston aforesaid, son and heir of Robert Bacon who lived in the times of King Henry IV and King Henry V and was high Sheriff of Norfolk and Suffolk in the first year of the reign of King Henry IV aforesaid, which Robert Bacon was son and heir of Henry Bacon, son and heir of Adam Bacon, son and heir of John Bacon, Kt, second son of Sir Edmund Bacon, Kt and heir to Dame Marjorie; second wife of the said Sir Edmund Bacon, daughter and heir of Robert Quapladde, Esq, which Sir Edmund was son and heir of William Bacon, a squire, who lived in the time of the reign of King Edward II... .. and so finding by disentes the antiquities of his ancestors, we could not without the great prejudice of him and his posterity, but accordingly assign unto him and them, all those arms descended unto him and them for his and their ancestors, as doth and may appear by the descent and declaration before specified, that is to say, that he and they may bear two several coats of arms quarterly as follows: The first for Bacon, gules on a chief silver, two mullets sables. The second four Quadpladde, barry of six pieces, gold and azure, a bend gules. And for as much as there can be no certain proof made of any creast or cognisance belonging or appertaining to the said armes (as to very many ancient coat of armes there is none) we, the said Kings of Armes by power and authoritie to us committed, and also with the consent of the high and mighty Prince Thomas, Duke of Norfolk, Erle Marechall of Englonde, have assigned, given and granted unto the aforesaid SIR NICHOLAS BACON Kt lord keeper of the great seal of England, to these his ancient armes a creast due and lawful to be borne, that is to say, on a force silver and gules, a bore passant, ermine mantely'd asure doubled gold, as more playnly appeareth depicted in the margent, which armes and creast, and every part and parcell thereof we, the said Kings of Armes do by these presentes ratify confirm give and grant unto the said Sir Nicholas Bacon Kt, and to his posterity forever, &c, &c.

In witness &c Feb. 22 1568

G. Dethick, alias Garter Principall King of Armes

Robert Cooke, alias Clarencieux Roy D'Arms

P. Moy William Flower alias Norroy Roy D'Armes."

Sir Nicholas Bacon (28 Dec. 1510 – 20 Feb. 1579) was born the third son of Sir Robert Bacon, Kt. (c.1467 – Dec. 1548) and Isabella Bacon (c.1479 – ?). The first born son, Thomas Bacon (c.1505 – 1535) died in 1535, leaving the second son, James Bacon¹ (1509 – 5 June 1573), as the eldest son and Sir Nicholas as the second son of Sir Robert. When Sir Nicholas Bacon was granted his own coat of arms in February 1568 as Lord Keeper of the Great Seal (appointed 1558), his coat of arms carried on its shield the crescent cadency mark of the second son, as can be seen in the heraldic bookplate that marks Sir Nicholas' gift of seventy volumes to Cambridge University Library in 1574. The bookplate was a hand-coloured woodcut, probably printed by Richard Tottel of Fleet Street. The illustration given here, which is identical to that on the bookplate, is from the 1576 edition of Gerard Legh's *The Accedens of Armory*.² The bookplate can also be found uncoloured amongst the odds and ends in the Bagford Collection, British Library.³



Coat of Arms of Sir Nicholas Bacon, Lord Keeper of the Great Seal. Illustration from the 1576 edition of Gerard Legh's *The Accedens of Armory*.

Sir Nicholas Bacon's coat of arms is made up of the coats of arms of two families—the Bacon family and the Quaplode family—plus a helmet (as a knight), crest, mantle and motto.

The two several coats of arms are displayed 'quartered'. In the top heraldic right (dexter) and bottom heraldic left (sinister) quarters are the arms of the Bacon family ("gules on a chief silver, two mullets sables"),⁴ and in the other quarters are the arms of the Quaplode family ("Barrey of six pieces, gold and azure, a bend gules").⁵ The Quaplodes were a landed family in Norfolk whose heiress married into the Bacon family.

The crest is a boar passant ('striding'), coloured ermine (a 'fur' with white background covered with a pattern of black shapes) set on top of a helmet that has a mantle of "azure doubled gold" (i.e. a combination of blue and gold).

The mantle is drapery that is tied to the helmet and descends each side of the shield. It is a symbol of sovereign power, normally reserved for royalty but in some cases its use has also been granted to other nobles in recognition of particular merits, such as, in this case, for Sir Nicholas Bacon as the Queen's Lord Keeper of the Great Seal.

In this coloured version both the boar and the shield carry a crescent cadency mark, whilst the uncoloured version (see below) only shows the mark on the shield.

Sir Nicholas Bacon's motto is "Mediocria Firma", meaning 'the middle way is firm, sure', or 'Moderation is strength'.



Coat of Arms of Sir Nicholas Bacon, Lord Keeper of the Great Seal.

Uncoloured copy of bookplate marking Bacon's gift to Cambridge University Library in 1574.

Illustration derived from the Bagford Collection, British Library.

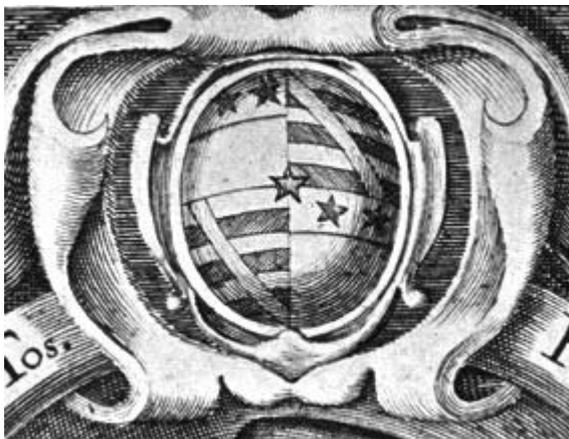
Sir Nicholas Bacon's coat of arms was granted to him "and to his posterity forever". Of this posterity there were two branches: the children of his first wife, Jane Ferneley (m.1540), and the children of his second wife, Anne Cooke (m.1553). By Jane Ferneley he had six surviving children—three sons (Nicholas, Edward and Nathaniel) and three daughters (Elizabeth, Anne and Jane). By Anne Cooke he had two sons—Anthony and Francis.

Sir Francis Bacon, Baron Verulam of Verulam, Viscount St Alban

Francis Bacon (22 Jan 1561 - 9 Apr 1626) was born the second son of Sir Nicholas Bacon and Lady Anne Bacon (née Cooke). He was the younger brother of Anthony Bacon, and half-brother of Sir Nicholas Bacon, 1st Bt., Elizabeth (Bacon) Peryam, Sir Nathaniel Bacon, Anne (Bacon) Woodhouse, Sir Edward Bacon and Jane Bacon, all children of Sir Nicholas by his first wife, Jane Ferneley. Francis Bacon became the husband of Alice Barnham (m. 10 May 1606).

Both Anthony and Francis Bacon inherited their father's coat of arms. Anthony died in 1601, but he was never knighted and there is no evidence that he ever used the coat of arms. Francis Bacon was knighted in 1603, and his coat of arms appears in John Guillim's *A Display of Heraldry* (1610). When Bacon became Lord Keeper of the Great Seal and Viscount St Alban respectively, two further versions of his coat of arms appeared in two particular publications:-

1. The portrait of Bacon engraved by Simon Pass that was printed in Holland's *Baziliologia* (1618). The portrait was done from life in the first half of 1618, after Bacon had been created Lord Chancellor (4 January 1618) but before he was created Baron Verulam of Verulam (12 July 1618). This picture shows the quartered Bacon coat of arms as an ovoid above Bacon's portrait. Not only is this ovoid shape unusual but also the crescent moon in the centre of the shield has been deliberately replaced by an extra mullet (star).



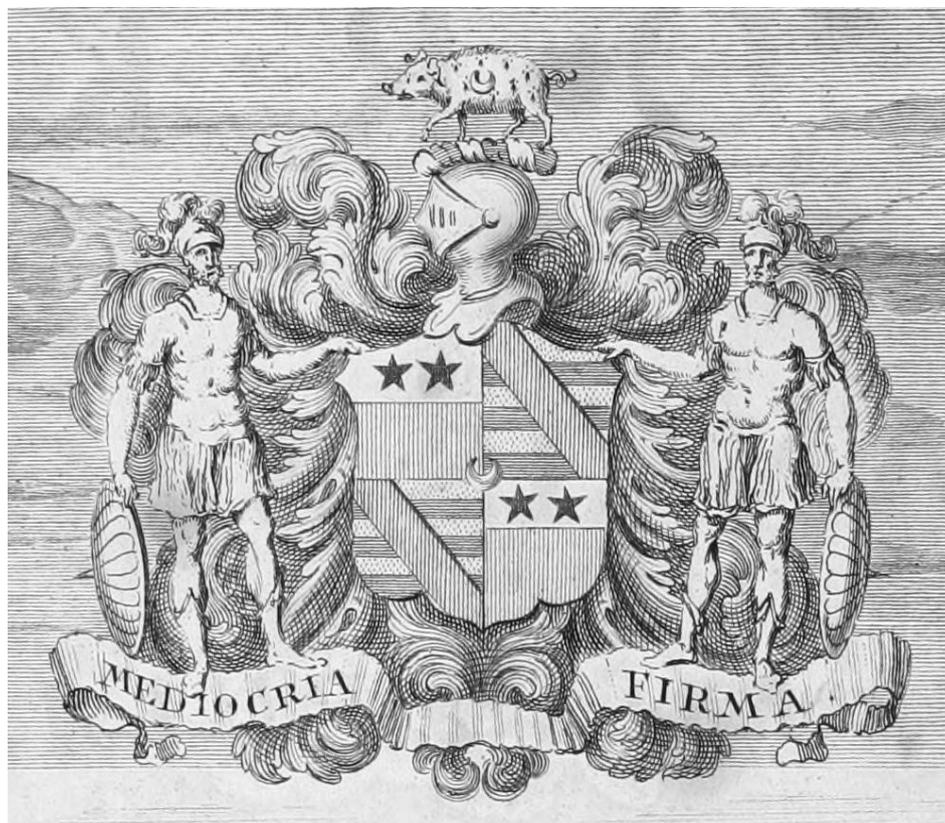
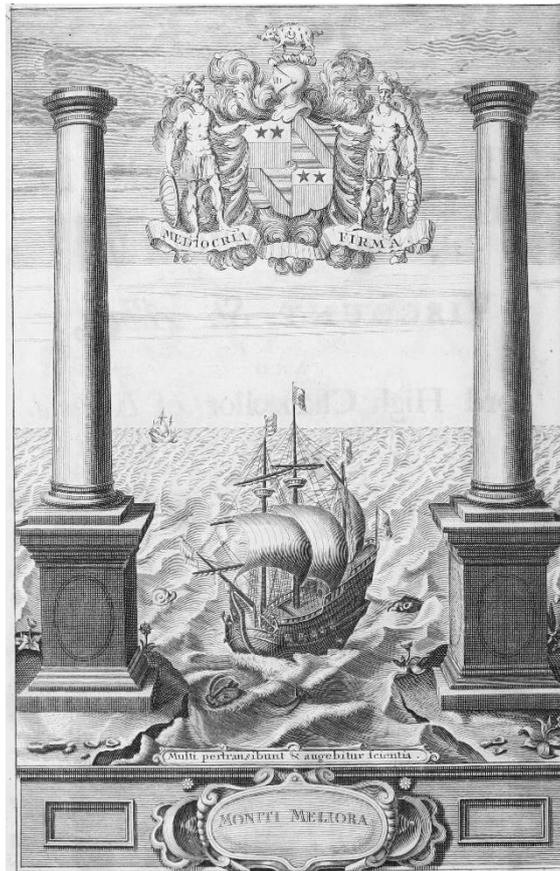
2. The frontispiece of Bacon's *Sylva Sylvarum* (1626), in which the same plate engraved by Simon Passe is reused but with suitable changes to reflect the fact that Bacon held, by the time of his death (Easter Day, 1626), the titles of Baron Verulam of Verulam and Viscount Saint Alban (created 3rd February 1621). In this frontispiece the Bacon coat of arms is displayed on a more elaborate-shaped shield and contained in the complete heraldic achievement of Francis Bacon as Viscount St Alban. Both the shield and the boar crest show the crescent moon cadency mark (of a second son) inherited from Sir Nicholas Bacon, who was the second son when he was granted his particular version of the Bacon coat of arms.



Sir Francis Bacon's heraldic achievement as Viscount St Alban contains:

- A shield quartered: [Bacon] gules on a chief argent with two mullets sable; [Quaplode] barry of six or and azure, a bend gules. Small crescent argent in heart.
- Helmet: helm argent, mantled azure doubled gold.
- Crest: boar passant, ermine, a crescent for difference.
- Supporters: two Roman Centurions.
- Motto: *Mediocria Firma*.

Although not coloured, this heraldic achievement can be more clearly seen in the frontispiece to Vol. II of Mallet's 1740 edition of Bacon's *Works*.⁶ This frontispiece is that of Bacon's 1620 *Instauratio Magna* title page, but with the title, etc., removed and the heraldic achievement added. (See overleaf →)



**Coat of Arms of Francis Bacon, Viscount St Alban,
as shown in the frontispiece to Mallet's *The Works of Francis Bacon*, Vol.2 (1740)**

In the frontispiece to the 1640 edition of Francis Bacon's *Advancement and Proficiency of Learning*, Bacon's coat of arms as Viscount St Alban is depicted on a square lozenge-shaped plaque displaying the Bacon coat of arms on a more regular-shaped shield and crowned with the 17th century-style coronet of a viscount.



Sir Francis Bacon was the first and last Viscount St Alban. The title was created for and granted uniquely to him, as also was his earlier title of Baron Verulam of Verulam. Both titles are indicators of the more hidden or secret side of the man, whom Ben Jonson described as both shrouded in and performing a mystery.

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Endnotes

¹ Sheriff of London, 1569.

² See: <http://www.middlesex-heraldry.org.uk/publications/seaxe/Seaxe52-200609.pdf>

³ Sir Nicholas' bookplate marking his gift to Cambridge University is the oldest (i.e. earliest) example of such a heraldic gift plate being used in England.

See: <https://bookplatesexlibris.wordpress.com/overview>

See also: <http://www.ajhw.co.uk/books/book390/book390.html>

⁴ In heraldry, gules is the tincture with the colour red, and belongs to the class of dark tinctures called "colours". In the Bacon coat of arms gules refers to the red colour painted on a silver background - the silver band or "bar" above the red is the unpainted part and this displays the sable mullets, which means black stars (in this case, five-pointed stars) on a silver bar.

⁵ A 'barrey' is a horizontal bar. A 'bend' is a band or strap running from the upper dexter (the bearer's right side and the viewer's left) corner of the shield to the lower sinister (the bearer's left side, and the viewer's right).

⁶ David Mallet, *The Works of Francis Bacon, Baron of Verulam, Viscount St Alban, and Lord High Chancellor of England*, Vol.2.