



# POCKLINGTON 500

Celebrating the school's 500<sup>th</sup> birthday

## THE ARMS OF POCKLINGTON SCHOOL FOUNDATION



The School has recently adopted this design as the coat of arms to be used on all occasions. In this article Alan Heaven explains how the final design was achieved.

By now, most readers of this article will be familiar with the visual conclusion to the piece of work which began three years ago.

Following my initial paper on the subject, which in turn builds upon exchanges of letters early in the 20th century, the brief was given to designer Steve Ellis and myself, advised by Andrew Dawes, to achieve two things: first, a coat of arms which acknowledges what people perceive as 'the original' and which is therefore immediately identifiable as belonging to the School – the brand identity if you like; second, one which rectifies the heraldic errors which have crept in. A third request, that it should recognise the setting and the name of the School, was added.

The result is in no sense a new design. Rather, it is a clarification of an old one. However, at the same time as it looks back to our 500 year old origins, so it includes within the **blazon** itself a small but significant difference which marks our present date and looks forwards. It is a design, we believe, which indicates a new millennium, a new Foundation, a new and positive period for Pocklington School, building on the past to move into the future. This may seem a rather grandiose claim for what is essentially a small mark, but heraldically it is crucial.

I should say at this point what is meant by 'blazon'. This is the essential core of the coat of arms and is described in heraldic terms and colours. It correctly consists of the following elements: the **field** (that is, the background tincture of the shield, the shape of which is of no heraldic significance and need not be recorded. Ermine, for example, or azure.) The **ordinary** (that is the lines which cut across the

shield, making a cross, for example, or a wide bar.) The **differences** (that is, any animals, shapes, objects or symbols placed upon the field or the ordinary.) There are other elements but these are the main three.

After that, the external ornamentation forms part of the blazon. This consists of the **helm** (the helmet); the **wreath** on which it sits and the crest which rises from the top of the helm. The helm we'll come to below. The wreath is consistent and the crest always consists of arms bent, realistically coloured with counter changed cuffs and sleeves. The size of the supported wheat sheaf is much less consistent, while the design of all of them is subject to considerable artistic licence.

If you take a walk around the School when you're next there you'll find a bewildering variety of contrasts within a structural similarity. Some have been repainted the wrong colours. Some have been helpfully 'tidied up' in the past. Much the nastiest are the strangely-antlered logos to be found on some sports clothing. Much the best – and one of the inspirations for Steve's work – is on the war memorial in the chapel. It is the closest to being heraldically correct and is beautiful.

The consistency we have introduced covers all the blazon. We have retained the azure field, the four wheat sheaves, the fess dancetty in gold, the blue and gold wreath, the arms embowed holding the wheat sheaf. These have been correctly proportioned. We have resisted the temptation to insert the doves of John Dowman's probable rebus, his visual pun on his name (dov-man / dow-man). However – and this is the first and most significant of the three major changes – we have added something. The purpose of the difference was to indicate a moving on from the previous owner. A second son might insert a crescent, adding to the blazon but not defacing his inheritance. We have inserted a difference within the fess: a thin azure line which sits within the gold and mirrors the fess. It represents the stripes on the ties worn by the pupils.

The second major change is simply a correction. On almost all extant depictions of the arms the helm is shown as grated, in profile. This barred visor is a signifier of membership of the peerage and inappropriate for an institution. The correct form for us, as it would have been for Dowman, is a closed helm in profile. Steve has used the stylish and rather attractive type called a **tilting helm**, with its sweeping lines and given it a rakish angle instead of flat two-dimensionality. There are two other elements to the coat of arms as commonly seen which are not recorded heraldically and which are left entirely up to the artist (in England, at least. The Scots have a

different view of this.) These are the **motto** at the bottom and the wonderful explosion of cape and drapery which surrounds the shield: the **mantling**. The second of these is entirely Steve's creation. Previously, it appears as bits of seaweed jutting out awkwardly. It has had neither grace nor beauty. Now it flows from the shield and 'shoulders' – an alternative to the wreath – and brings colour and grandeur to the design. The motto previously curled upwards and took over the usual position of the mantling, making the image unbalanced. We have reduced this and introduced a second scroll which opens below the original, inspired by a 1920s bookplate discovered by Andrew Dawes. Here the setting and name of the School are recorded in English, making the information more accessible to most people than Latin. The other advantage of this is that future generations can easily remove the secondary scrolling without affecting the overall design should they wish. We hope you like this version. When seen in its richest gold and blue it is a striking and magnificent design. The thanks of myself, Steve Ellis and Andrew Dawes go to the many people who have offered advice and assistance.

Incidentally, the complete letters exchanged last century can be consulted in the School archive; my original paper on the subject is on the portal and the views of any heraldically inclined readers on whether our new lines really do just constitute a difference or actually show a fess dancetty cottised (bearing in mind the ratios) are warmly welcomed.

**Alan Heaven**  
(Head of Drama, TST Artistic Director)



St. John's stained glass