

THE ARMS OF LORD DE VILLIERS

Noel Cox

The Right Honourable Arthur Percy de Villiers is third Baron de Villiers, of Wynberg, Cape of Good Hope (created 1910 in the peerage of the United Kingdom). His Lordship was born 1911, and succeeded to the title in 1934.

Lord de Villiers was a barrister in England (of the Inner Temple) and New Zealand, and has farmed in New Zealand. His lordship's address is PO Box 66, Kumeu, Auckland.

The barony was originally created for Sir John de Villiers, KCMG, the first Chief Justice of South Africa. As Chief Justice of the Cape Colony 1874-1914, and Chief Justice of the Union of South Africa 1910-14, did much to modernise the Roman-Dutch law of the Cape. He was also Attorney-General of the Cape Colony 1872-74.

Lord de Villiers was descended from Pierre de Villiers, a Huguenot refugee from La Rochelle, France, who had settled in South Africa in 1689. There were but one of thousands of families who fled France to escape persecution for their Protestant faith.

Many of these families settled in Britain, and in the colonies of the European powers. Some 150 French Huguenot refugees, including Pierre de Villiers, in 1688-89 strengthened the ranks of the largely Dutch settlers of the Cape. The Huguenots amounted to 17% of the small community. Calvinists from an elevated social class, they made a notable contribution to the life and culture of the future Afrikaaner people.

For a number of generations the de Villiers family maintained their French heritage, generally marrying into other French families. By the end of the eighteenth century however they had become assimilated into the Afrikaans-speaking population.

The armorial bearings of Lord de Villiers, granted 1910, have strong legal symbolism, as might be expected for a leading judge. The blazon is *Azure a bend enhanced Argent, on a mount in base a paschal lamb Proper*. The main feature is the paschal lamb. This is a symbol of legal as well as religious significance.

The arms of the Middle Temple, which were confirmed in 1949 (though they are much more ancient) comprise *Argent on a cross Gules a paschal lamb supporting a banner Or*. The first Lord de Villiers was a Barrister of the Middle Temple, London.

The supporters have a pronounced South African appearance: *On either side a springbok Proper gorged with a circlet of gold embellished with nine pearls raised upon points*. The circlets are those of viscounts. The springbok is the ubiquitous symbol of South Africa.

The crest is *issuant from a circlet of gold embellished with nine pearls raised upon points a dexter arm in armour embowed grasping in the hand a seax Argent*. The seax is a curved scimitar, or falchion, having a notch at the back of the blade.

The motto is *La main à l'œuvre*.

Arthur, Lord de Villiers

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Motto: *La main à l'œuvre.*