



**ARMS 1:** Per pale Argent and Gules a Fesse Azure.

**ARMS 2:** Argent an Eagle displayed wings inverted and head turned towards the sinister Sable ducally crowned and surmounted by a Castle of three tiers Or.

Recorded at Visitations on 7th June 1566 and in 1634. Exemplified to the North Bedfordshire Borough Council (later renamed Bedford Borough Council) by the Kings of Arms on the 30th December 1977 following a Royal Warrant dated 29th April 1977.

Bedford uses both shields, the upper arms are the proper arms, the lower arms are often used as a badge. The arms with the eagle are used more widely however. There is much conjecture about the origin of both arms.

The upper arms may be derived from a banner, the right may be derived from the arms of the last member of the Beauchamp family, Lords of Bedford, who was killed in 1265. Another theory is that they are intended to suggest a town divided north and south by the highway, east and west by the river.

The castle on the eagle is taken from the oldest known seal of Bedford, dating from the 15th century. The second seal also showed the castle but flanked by two salamanders. It also dates from the 14th century. The eagle and castle appear on the seals in 1836. The last male of the Beauchamps of Bedford, who held the barony and castle and was killed at the Battle of Evesham in 1265, is said to have borne a shield with an eagle, unlike the rest of the family, and since the barony then fell into abeyance between his daughters, the town may have adopted the eagle to remind themselves that they had no overlord.

Mr Gale Pedrick, in *Borough Seals*, states: 'the eagle is derived from the bearings of the Beauchamps, the ancient Barons of Bedford, namely, argent, an eagle sable, beak and claws or.' But the arms of the Beauchamps of Bedford were gold and red quarters with a black bend. It seems that the designer of the fifteenth-century seal on which the arms of Bedford were based may have incorporated the eagle of another family of Beauchamps or it may be the eagle of the last of the Beauchamps mentioned above. The castle is probably intended to represent the old stronghold of the Beauchamps.

Both coats of arms are used without either crest, motto or supporters.