

SPOTLIGHT

on the SAIMM coat-of-arms

by R. P. PLEWMAN*

The Chemical, Metallurgical and Mining Society, from which The South African Institute of Mining and Metallurgy is descended, had as its coat-of-arms a green shield with a very flat gold chevron dividing the field into two. A crossed pick and shovel occupied the lower half, and an alembic (distilling vessel) and a flaming crucible occupied the top half.

In 1965 Harry Cross, then President of the SAIMM, suggested to Council that it would be appropriate to update the coat-of-arms, particularly as the word *chemical* was no longer part of the name of the Institute. Council agreed, and a Working Group was set up to investigate heraldic procedure with the aim of eventually procuring an appropriate 'achievement of arms' for the Institute.

The Working Group consisted of Professor Plewman, as convener, with Mr Britten and Mr Stobart. After many months of work, including several visits to Pretoria to the Bureau of Heraldry, three possible designs were laid before Council, and Council selected the version that is today the Institute's emblem.

It is perhaps of interest to note that, in the practice of heraldry, it is the description of the achievement that is registered, not its pictorial representation. Heraldic artists are free to vary the illustration as long as they conform to the description. Nevertheless, it was felt wise to submit a properly drawn illustration to the Bureau of Heraldry, and Mr P. J. van Rensburg arranged for a Gold Fields' draughtsman to provide the illustration, working from the roughed out design of the Working Group.

The motto *Capaci occasio* means *To the capable the opportunity*.

A blue shield was chosen divided into three fields by a steep gold chevron. The pick and shovel of mining occupies the lower field, and flaming crucibles for metallurgy occupy each of the upper fields. The suppor-



ters, a black lion for mining, ermined, and a golden dragon for metallurgy, were selected with the idea that coal would be represented by the lion's colour, and the bravery of miners by the heraldic beast, while the metallic dragon with its fire-breathing reputation would represent both extraction and physical metallurgy. The lion was given a gold collar with blue diamonds, and surcharged with a pick and shovel on its shoulder. The dragon was given a black collar with blue diamonds, and surcharged on its shoulder with the alembic, the original symbol of the chemist in the Institute's ancestral society. Appropriately the supporters stand on an outcrop of ore. Finally, the crest is a small black lion, holding in its paw a protea to signify South Africa.

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