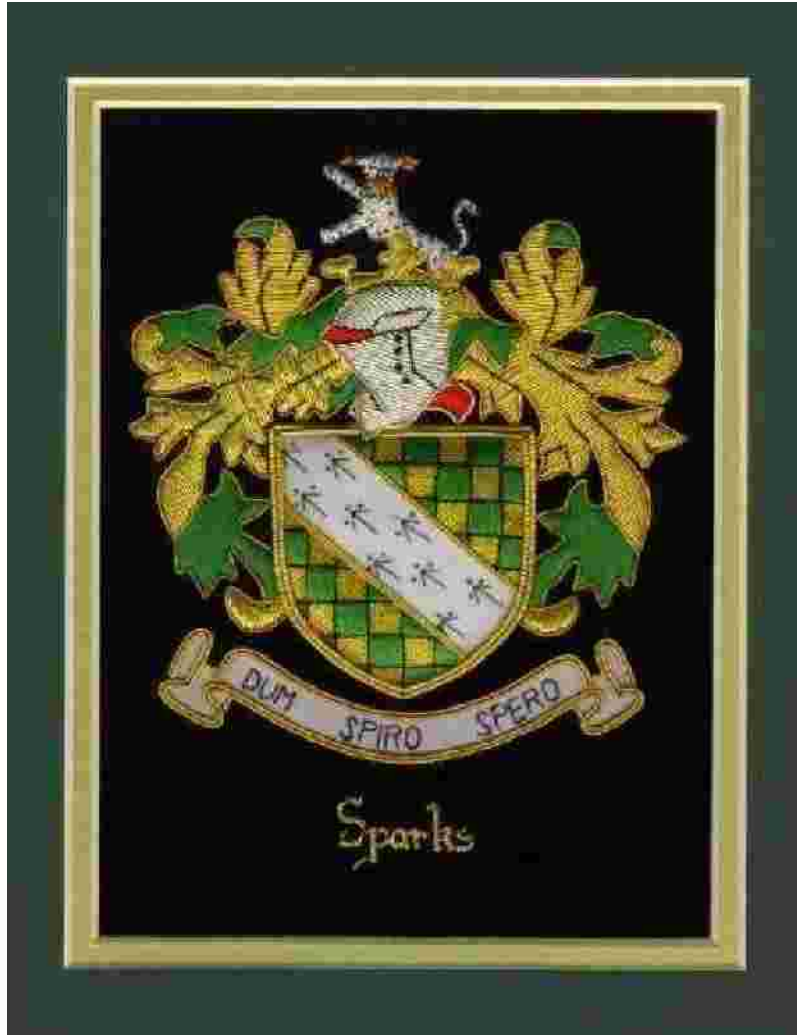


## SPARKS COAT OF ARMS



**The Sparks name was originally Sparrowhawk. The story goes that when people began taking surnames from their occupations, there was a man who was the chief falconer for Richard the Lion Hearted. Richard's favorite falcon was the Sparrowhawk being the swiftest and most true. This man's name became Sparrowhawk. As time passed, some of his descendants shortened it to Sparks.**

The family motto is "*Celer et Verus*" (Swift and True).

The Leopard Rampant is believed to have come from a Scottish Knight who was an ally of Richard's and saved the King's life twice during the Crusades. It was originally a sleeping leopard, but was raised to rampant because of the knight's efforts. The crest also contains a ducal coronet under the leopard and the leopard has fire spewing from his mouth and ears.

The Field - Chequy or et vert (gold and green checks) with band-ermine. (Those little things in the diagonal white stripe are ermine tails signifying royalty). The green checks are for the Scottish highlands.

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**Subj: Sparks in England**

**Date: 3/17/99 1:33:59 AM Central Standard Time**

**From: johnseng@lava.net (Rockne H. Johnson)**

**To: SPARKS-L@rootsweb.com**

I have spent a couple of days looking at the distribution of the surname Sparks in England and may spend a couple more. But I think that the results so far are interesting enough to justify an interim report.

I am aware that "authorities" say that the name is derived from Sparrowhawk, proceeding through Sparhawk and Spark to Sparks. I don't doubt that there are documented instances of this happening. In ages past, spelling was not important even to those who could read and write. The vicar, rector, or curate wrote the names in the parish registers however he pleased. The vast illiterate majority of his

parishioners could not have offered a correction. So the spelling of names changed. But I now doubt that this particular mutation for Sparks was the general case or even the usual case.

I used the IGI, both on microfiche and CD, as a data source. To begin with, I looked at the distribution by county for all variant spellings (Spark, Sparks, Sparke, and Sparkes) lumped together. In the microfiche I counted, for each county, the number of 'frames', of up to 60 lines each, containing the surname. Then I counted the number of fiche, of 460 frames each, for each county. I divided one number by the other and, with appropriate multipliers, arrived at the approximate number of Sparks, etc., per 100,000 of the population. These numbers varied from 105 for Devon to next to nothing for the less fortunate counties.

The population densities were then plotted on a map of England. The results showed five peaks, at Devon 105, Suffolk 96, Durham 74, Gloucestershire 68, and Hampshire 60, with decidedly lower values in between. (The mean for all forty of the old counties was 33 per 100,000. By contrast, the 1790 US census contained about 20 Sparks per 100,000.)

Today in America there is said to be 100 persons named Sparks for every person named Spark. In England it is quite different. Of the four spellings, Spark, Sparke, Sparkes, and Sparks, about 60% in the IGI are Spark and Sparke. In fact, a closer look at the five peaks named in the foregoing paragraph shows that they are comprised of different spellings. Devon, Suffolk, and Durham are predominantly Spark and Sparke while Hampshire and Gloucestershire are even more predominantly Sparks and Sparkes. In Hampshire 99% of the spellings are Sparks and Sparkes. In Devon

**81% of the spellings are Sparke and Spark.**

**The northern counties of Durham, Northumberland, and Cumberland are probably in a class by themselves. They are adjacent to Scotland which has a large population with the spelling almost exclusively Spark.**

**What about Sparrowhawk? The IGI show that this surname was most concentrated in the counties of Oxfordshire and Berkshire, a relatively low-density area for Spark, etc. There were no Sparrowhawks in Devon or Durham and precious few in Suffolk, Gloucestershire, or Hampshire. There were zero Sparhawks in the IGI in Devon, Durham, Hampshire, and Gloucestershire. Did the families who changed their names to Spark or Sparks all move away from the Sparrowhawk homeland? Or did the Sparrowhawks and Sparhawks who moved away from the homeland all get their names changed to Sparke or Sparkes (involuntarily by the country clergy)?**

**Why did so many more Sparks families come to America than did Spark families? Did it have anything to do with the seaports of Bristol and Southampton being in the Sparks counties? The seaport of Plymouth is in a Spark county.**

**Is further study warranted?**

**Rock**