

## Franks Forage No 8A.      **The Luce**

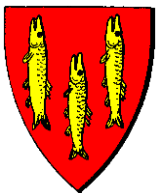


The luce, or pike (*esox lucius*), is a large freshwater fish found throughout the Northern hemisphere, admired by anglers for its fighting qualities. It is a predator that preys on other fish

(including the young of its own species), and small animals and birds that live by the water, especially ducklings. It helps keep the balance of aquatic wildlife. Female pike have been caught in excess of 40lb on certain lakes and broads in the UK, which makes the pike the heaviest predator in the land. Only the female grows so large; the male rarely exceeding 12lb. The pike will swallow its prey head first. It has sharp teeth and the roof of its mouth is a myriad of sharp backward pointing spikelets, so sharp that running a finger along it will cause laceration as I know only too well! Also interesting, is that the colouration and markings of individual pike are different in the same way that human fingerprints are all different. The pike is a solitary creature lying motionless in wait for its prey. It is valued as a food although fresh water fish is an acquired taste!

So how did the luce or pike come to be on the Lucy coat of arms? This is a question often asked by visitors. I am no heraldic expert but the following is a result of my 'foraging'. Luce is Middle English and is derived from the Old French luc or lus and that from the Latin lucius. In English heraldry the term became lucy. To quote from 'A Complete Guide to Heraldry' by A.C. Fox-Davies: - "A pike or jack is more often termed a 'lucy' in English heraldry and a 'ged' in Scottish. Under its various names it occurs in the arms of Lucy, Lucas, Geddes and Pike".<sup>1</sup> When the nobility began to use Coats of Arms as an aid to recognition on the field of battle in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, the designs would often pun their names. So the Lucys used the luce or lucy and eventually the shield bore three luc(i)es. Early Lucy seals depicted a single lucy haurient with its head out of water. In heraldry the term haurient is "Applied to fish when borne palewise or upright, **as if** putting its head out of water to draw or suck in air". ('As if' is important as fish don't normally come up for air). The later term 'pike' is probably so called because of the shape of its head resembling a spike or type of pike (weapon). In modern French the pike is a brochet. The depicted shape of the pike differs variously at Charlecote. The best shape depictions are on the carpets and fireplaces. Others are approximations but the least pike-like are on the village signs where they more resemble some kind of swordfish on the approaches to Charlecote and the stylised logo used at Charlecote. Apparently the pike is used in heraldry more than any other fish

I understand that the surname Lucy has its origins in the village of Lucé in Normandy and they came to England in the wake of the Conquest.



Arms of Geoffrey de Lucy  
C1170-1234

A 28 pounder



### Notes

1. A Complete Guide to Heraldry Arthur Charles Fox-Davies, London T. C. & E. C. Jack 1909. p255