

from *Heraldry for Craftsmen and Designers*
Introduction
by W. H. St. John Hope
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Heraldry, or armory as it was anciently called, is a symbolical and pictorial language of uncertain and disputed origin, which, by the beginning of the thirteenth century, had already been reduced to a science with a system, classification, and nomenclature of its own. The artistic devices known as arms, which may be formed by proper combination of the colours, ordinaries, and figures that represent the letters of this language, had each their significance, and soon came to be regarded as the hereditary possession of some person, family, dignity, or office.

The display of arms was restricted primarily to shields and banners, but occasionally to horse trappers and such garments as jupes, gowns, and mantles. Later on heraldry came also to be used ornamentally, either upon shields or without them, in all kinds of ways, in architecture and on monuments, on tiles and in glazing, in woodcarvings and in paintings, in woven stuffs and embroideries, in jewellery and on seals.

The colours used in heraldry are red, blue, green, purple, and black, or to give them their old names, gules, azure, vert, purple, and sable; combined with the yellow of gold and the whiteness of silver. Orange was never used, probably on account of the difficulty of finding a stable pigment. It was soon found that for brilliancy of effect the use of gold or silver with a colour was preferable to that of colour with colour or metal with metal; two colours are therefore found together or superposed only under certain conditions, and the same applies to the two metals.

Imitation of two furs, ermine and vair, were also used: the one of white flecked with little black tails; the other of alternating oblong patches of white and blue, square at the top and rounded at the bottom, to represent grey squirrels' skins. If vair were colored other than white and blue, the resultant was called vairy. There is also known a black fur with silver ermine-tails.

There were never any exact rules as to the particular tint of the colour employed, that being simply a matter of taste. Thus blue may range from a full indigo almost to Cambridge-blue, and red from a bright scarlet, through vermilion, to a dull brick colour, and so on; and it is surprising to find how well quiet colours blend together.

In the formation of arms the mere combinations of colours and metals produced by vertical, horizontal, or other divisions of the shield were soon exhausted, as were quarters, checkers, etc. There accordingly grew quite naturally the further use of applied strips or bands based upon such divisions.

Thus the vertical parting of a metal and a colour known as party produced the pale, and a horizontal division the fesse or bar, and these combined to form the cross suggested by the quarterlines. An oblique or slanting parting gave rise to the bend, and the crossing of two such produced the St. Andrew's cross or saltire. A combination of the lines of a saltire with a quarterly division produced the varied field called gyronny. The border almost suggested itself.

A cutting off of the upper half or head of the shield yielded the chief, and of the fourth part the quarter. One other of these applied pieces, or ordinaries as they were called, was the cheveron, formed of two strips issuing from the lower edges of the shield and meeting in a point in the middle, like the cheverons forming the roof timbers of a house. Another ordinary was the pile, which was often threefold with lines converging towards the base.

Sometimes a shield was charged [making use of any emblem or device occupying the field of a shield] with one of a smaller size called a scutcheon, and the middle of this was occasionally cut out to form a voided scutcheon or orle. Flanches, as they are called, are very rarely found; they were formed by drawing in-curving lines within each side of the shield.

An even series of pales yielded a vertical striping called paly, and of piles, pily, while an even number of bars became barry. Undulated or waved bars formed wavy, and sometimes paly and pily stripes were also waved. In early examples the bend was often bended or curved. Bends were so represented in one of the shields in Westminster Abbey, in some of the shields over the nave arcades in York minster, and a number of monumental effigies. A narrower bend which overlaid everything was known as a baston. A number of narrow bends produced a bendy, but the lines were then straight. A field divided into squares or checkers formed checky, and when it divided into what are now called lozenges it became lozengy.

Pales, fesses, crosses, saltires, borders, and cheverons sometimes had their edges engrailed by taking out of them, as it were, a continuous series of bites separated by sharp points, and the lower edge of a chief or the inner margin of a border was often indented like the edge of a saw; but in early heraldry engrailing and indenting were interchangeable terms. An indented fesse was anciently called a daunce. Cheverons, fesses, bars, etc. were occasionally battled, through the upper line

being formed into battlements. A fesse was often placed between two cheverons, as in the well-known arms of FitzWalter; or between two very narrow bars called cotises, or pairs of cotises called gemell bars. Cheverons, bends, and pales were also sometimes cotised. Cotises were often of a tincture different from that of the ordinary which they accompanied, and sometimes indented or dancetty as in the arms of Clopton and Gonvile. The ground or field could be relieved by the use of vair or ermine, or by the addition of fretting or trellis work or other simple means. It was also not unfrequently powdered with small crosses, fleurs-de-li, or billets; often in conjunction with a larger charge like a cinqfoil or a lion.

Almost from the beginning every kind of device was charged or painted upon shields, either singly or in multiple, and upon or about such ordinaries as crosses, cheverons, and fesses. Birds, beasts, and fishes, and parts of them, like heads, or feet, or wings; flowers, fruits, and leaves; suns, moons or crescents, and stars; fleurs-de-lis, crosses, billets, roundels, rings, etc. all were pressed into service. The great rule as to colour held good as regards charges, and it was not permissible to paint a red rose upon blue or a gold star upon silver; but a red rose upon gold or a silver star upon blue was quite right.

It has however been lawful at all times to place an ordinary, such as a fesse or a cheveron, and whether charged or not, upon a parti-coloured field like quarterly, checky, paly or barry, or upon vair or vary. A quarter or a chief, or a border without reference to its colour, can also be added to any such field.

Conversely, a parti-coloured cross, fesse, or charge of any kind, is allowable upon a plain field.

In the Great Roll of arms, of Edward II, are instances of two shields, in the one case of a red lion, and in the other of a red *fer-de-moline*, on fields party gold and vert; also of a silver leopard upon a field party gold and gules, and of three red lions upon party gold and azure. Likewise of a shield with three lions ermine upon party azure and gules, and of another with wavy red bars upon a field party gold and silver.

In the arms, too, of Eton College granted by King Henry VI in 1448-9, three silver lilies on a black field are combined with a chief party azure and gules, with a gold leopard on the red half and a gold fleur-de-lis on the blue half. King Henry also granted in 1449, these arms, *party cheveronwise gules and sable three gold keys* to Roger Keys, clerk, for his services in connexion with the building of Eton College, and to his brother Thomas Keys and his descendants.

Shields with quarterly fields often had a single charge in the quarter, like the well-known molet of the Veres, or the eagle of Phelip.

Arms were sometimes counter-colored, by interchanging the tinctures of the whole or parts of an ordinary or charge or charges overlying a parti-colored field. This often has a very striking effect, as in the arms of St. Bartholomew's Hospital, which are *party silver and sable a cheveron counter-coloured* or those of Geoffrey Chaucer, who bore *party silver and gules a bend counter-coloured*. Sir Rober Farnham bore *quarterly silver and azure four crescents counter-colored*, or as the Great Roll describes them, 'de l'un en l'autre.' the town of Southampton like-wise bears for its arms *gules a chief silver with the three roses counter-colored*

In drawing party-colored fields it is as well to consider what are the old rules with regard to them. In the early rolls a field barry of silver and azure, or of gold and sable, is often described as of six pieces, that is with three coloured bars alternating with the three of metal, though barry of eight and even ten pieces is found. Paly of six pieces is also a normal number. But the number of pieces must always be even, or the alternate pieces will become bars or pales. The number of squares in each line of a checkered field or ordinary is also another important matter. Six or eight form the usual basis for the division of a field, but the seven on the seal of the Earl of Arenne and Surry attached to the Barons' Letter of 1300-1 is not without its artistic advantages. On an ordinary, such as a fesse or cross, there should be at least two rows of checkers. Here, however, as in other cases, much depends upon the size of the shield, and a large one could obviously carry with advantage either on field or ordinary more squares than a small one without infringing any heraldic law.

Besides the plain cross familiar to most of us in the arms of St. George, and the similar form with engrailed edges, there is a variety known as the ragged cross, derived from two crossed pieces of a tree with lopped branches. This is often used in the so-called arms of Our Lord, showing the instruments of His Passion, or in compositions associated therewith, as in the cross with the tree crowned nails forming the arms of the town of Colchester.

Several other forms of cross have also been used. The most popular of these is that with splayed or spreading ends, often split into three divisions, called the cross paty, which appears in the arms of St. Edward. It is practically the same as the cross called patonce, flory, or fleury, those being names applied to mere variations

of drawing. The cross with *les chefs flurettes* of the Great Roll seems to have been one flowered, or with fleurs-de-lis, at the ends.

Another favourite cross was that with forked or split ends, formed of a *fer-de-moline* or mill-rind, sometimes called a cross *fourchee*, or, when the split ends were coiled, a cross *recercele*. The arms of Antony Bek bishop of Durham (1284-1310) and patriarch of Jerusalem were *gules a fer-de-moline ermine*, and certain vestments "woven with a cross of his arms which are called *ferrum molendini*" passed to his cathedral church at his death. On his seal of dignity the bishop is shown actually wearing such a vestment of his arms.

The tau or St. Anthony's cross also occurs in some late fifteenth century arms.

The small crosses with which the field of a shield was sometimes powdered were usually what are now called crosslets, but with rounded instead of the modern squared angles, as in the Beauchamp arms, and a field powdered with these was simply called crusily. But the powdering sometimes consisted of crosses paty, or formy as they were also styled as in the arms of Berkeley, or of the cross with crutched ends called a cross potent, like that in the arms of the Kingdom of Jerusalem. These crosses often had a spiked foot, as if for fixing them in the ground, and were then further described as fitchy or crosses fixable.

Since the elucidation of the artistic rather than the scientific side of heraldry is the object of this present work, it is advisable to show how it may best be studied.

The artistic treatment of heraldry can only be taught imperfectly, by means of books, and it is far better that the student should be his own teacher by consulting such good examples of heraldic art as may commonly be found nigh at hand. He may, however, first equip himself to advantage with a proper grasp of the subject by reading carefully the admirable article on Heraldry, by Mr. Oswald Barron, in the new eleventh edition of *The Encyclopedia Britannica*.

The earliest and best of artistic authorities are heraldic seals. These came into common use towards the end of the twelfth century, much at the same time that armory itself became a thing of life, and they were constantly being engraved for men, and even for women, who bore and used arms, and for corporate bodies entitled to have seals.

Moreover, since every seal was produced under the direction of its owner and continually used by him, the heraldry displayed on seals has a personal interest of

the greatest value, as showing not only what arms the owner bore, but how they were intended to be seen.

From seals may be learnt the different shapes of shields, and the times of their changes of fashion; the methods of depicting crests; the origin and use of supporters; the treatment of the 'words' and 'reasons' now called mottoes; the various ways of combining arms to indicate alliances, kinships, and official connexions; and the many other effective ways in which heraldry may be treated artistically without breaking the rigid rules of its scientific side.

Seals, unfortunately, owing to their inaccessibility, are not so generally available for purposes of study as some other authorities. They are consequently comparatively little known. Fine series, both of original impressions and casts, are on exhibition in the British and the Victoria and Albert museums, and in not a few local museums also, but the great collection in the British Museum is practically the only public one that can be utilized to any extent by the heraldic student, and then under the limitation of applying for each seal by a separate ticket.

The many examples of armorial seals illustrated in the present work will give the student a good idea of their importance and high artistic excellence.

Next to the heraldry on seals, that displayed on tombs and monuments, and in combination with architecture, may be studied, and, of course, with greater ease, since such a number of examples is available. Many a village church is comparatively as rich in heraldry as the abbey churches of Westminster and St. Albans, or the minsters of Lincoln and York and Beverley.

It is to the country church, too, that we may often look for lovely examples of old heraldic glass, which has escaped the destruction of other subjects that were deemed more superstitious.

But the student is not restricted to ecclesiastical buildings in his search for good examples of heraldry.

Inasmuch as there never was such a thing as an ecclesiastical style, it was quite immaterial to the medieval master masons whether they were called in to build a church or a gatehouse, a castle or a mansion, a barn or a bridge. The master carpenter worked in the same way upon a rood loft or a pew end as upon the screen or the coffer in the house of the lord; the glazier filled alike with his coloured transparencies the bay of the hall, the window of the chapel, or that of the minster of the abbey; and the tiler sold his wares to sacrist, churchwarden, or squire alike.

The applications of heraldry to architecture are so numerous that it is not easy to deal with them in any degree of connexion.

Shields of arms, badges, crests, and supporters are freely used in every conceivable way, and on every reasonable place; on gatehouses and towers, on porches and doorways, in windows and on walls, on plinths, buttresses, and pinnacles, on cornice, frieze, and parapet, on chimney-pieces and spandrels, on vaults and roofs, on woodwork, metalwork, and furniture of all kinds, on tombs, fonts, pulpits, screens and coffers, in painting, in glass, and on the tiles of the floor.

Though actual examples are now rare, we know from pictures and monuments, and the tantalizing descriptions in inventories, to how large an extent heraldry was used in embroidery and woven work, on carpets and hangings, on copes and frontals, on gowns, mantles and jupes, on trappers and in banners, and even on the sails of ships.

Wills and inventories also tell us that in jewelry and goldsmiths' work heraldry played a prominent part, and by the aid of enamel it appeared in its proper colours, and advantage not always attainable otherwise. Beautiful examples of heraldic shields bright with enamel occur in the abbey church of Westminster on the tombs of King Edward III and of William of Valence, and on the tombs at Canterbury and Warwick respectively of Edward prince of Wales and Richard Beauchamp earl of Warwick; while in St. George's chapel in Windsor castle there are actually nearly, ninety enamelled stall-plates of Knights of the Garter of earlier date than Tudor times, extending from about 1390 to 1485, and forming in themselves a veritable heraldic storehouse of the highest artistic excellence.

Another source of coloured heraldry is to be found in the so-called rolls of arms.

While heraldry was a living art, it obviously became necessary to keep some record of the numerous armorial bearings which were already in use, as well as of those that were constantly being invented. This seems to have been done by entering the arms on long rolls of parchment. In the earliest examples these took the form of rows of painted shields, with the owners' names written over; but in a few rare cases the blazon or written description of the arms is also given, while other rolls consist wholly, of such descriptions, as in the well-known Great and Boroughbridge Rolls. These have a special value in supplying the terminology of the old heraldry, but this belongs to the science or grammar and not the art of it. The pictured rolls on the other hand clearly belong to the artistic side, and as they

date from the middle of the thirteenth century onwards, they show how the early heralds from time to time drew the arms they wished to record.

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