

Heraldry

1-An Introduction

This leaflet will help you understand how a coat of arms was put together and why it was done. Here is the important idea:

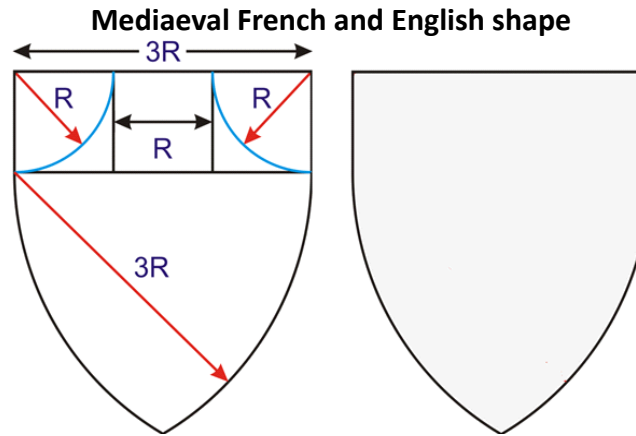
Heraldic devices are to identify the person bearing them.

If you were a mediaeval knight in battle you would want your followers and others on your side to know who you were, so they wouldn't attack you. Over their armour knights wore surcoats with their arms painted or sewn on them – a coat of arms – and had their personal devices painted on their shields for identification



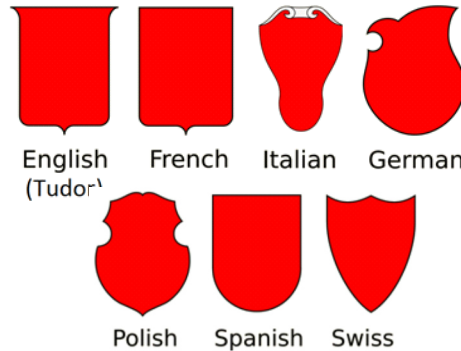
Arms are still painted on shields or "escutcheons".

Because you have the same surname as an armigerous family does NOT necessarily mean that you are entitled to their arms. Heraldry has many rules but still the main one is that nobody but you and members of your family should have exactly the same arms.

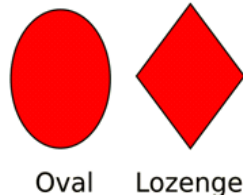


You can easily draw the traditional shape of a shield. First draw a box 3 times wider than high, then put a compass on one of the bottom corners, reach it over to the other bottom corner and draw an arc. Repeat from the opposite bottom corner and you will have a shield shaped like the one above.

Other Shapes



For ladies (who used not to go to war, so had no use for shields):

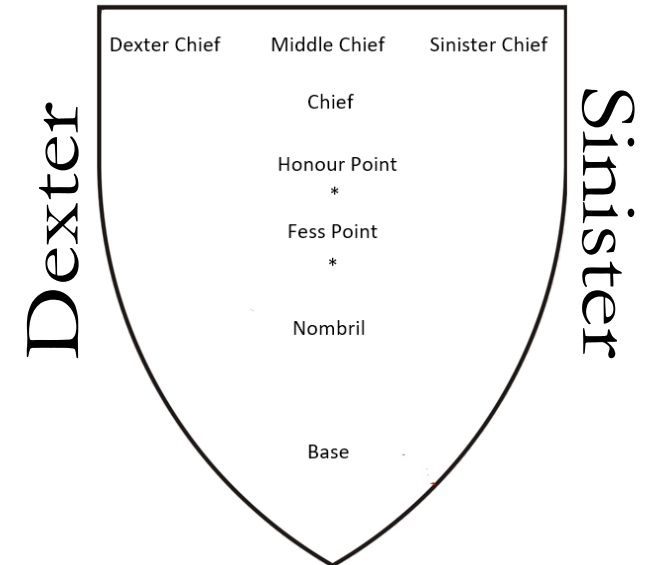


For quarters in "marshalled" arms (See Marshalling Arms leaflet)



More About the Escutcheon

Heraldry has its own jargon and many of the words come from Norman French or Latin. If you look at the escutcheon below, you will see that the right hand side is called Dexter and the left is called Sinister. You might think that Dexter is on the left but, in heraldry, it isn't because arms are always described from the point of view of the person bearing them. Imagine that you are carrying a shield; look downwards at it and you will see that Dexter really is on the right.



Various points of the escutcheon have names, as you can see. This is to help locate the objects – called "charges" – in the arms. For example, two crossed swords centred at the top of the shield and a three-legged zebra standing at the bottom would be described as "two swords in saltire in middle chief and a three-legged-zebra statant in base".



Tinctures

Of course, you would also have to say what colour everything is. The zebra is easy, because it is lifelike. If things are meant to look as they do in real life, they are described as “proper”.

But what about everything else?

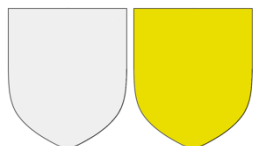
Heraldry uses a quite limited palette of “tinctures” consisting of four types: colours, metals, stains and furs. They all have heraldic names. All the colours and metals are shown below, as well as the important stains and furs

Colours:



Azure (Az) Gules (Gu) Purpure Sable (Sa) Vert

Metals:



Argent (Arg) Or

Stains:

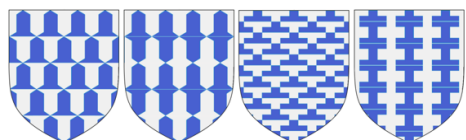


Carnation Orange Murrey Sanguine Tenné/Tawny

Furs:

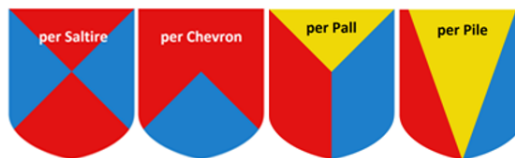
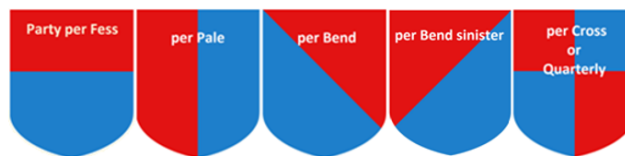


Ermine Ermines Erminois Pean Erminites (rare)



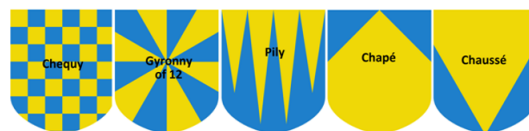
Vair Counter-Vair Potent Counter-Potent

Divisions of the Field (Lines of Partition)



Other Divisions of Two Tinctures

More “pattern like” divisions - barry, bendy, chequy, chevronny, fusilly, gyronny, lozengy, paly, pily. The number of divisions in the linear patterns can be specified e.g. barry of 8, gyronny of 12. Chapé and chaussé are rather ugly and rarely seen in English heraldry.



Divisions of Three Tinctures

The field is divided into 3 equal parts by one of four of the lines of partition: tierced-in-bend, tierced-in-fess, tierced-in-pale, tierced-in-chevron



Provided by <https://drawshield.net>
The leading heraldry drawing website
Version 1.0a

Ordinaries

An ordinary is a simple geometrical figure running from side to side or top to bottom of the shield. There are generally considered to be nine principal or “honourable” ordinaries: the chief, the cross, the bend, the bend sinister, the fess, the bar, the pale, the saltire, and the chevron.

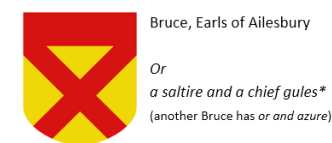


Summary - The Story So Far

So far we have dealt with dividing the field of the escutcheon with lines of partition and applying ordinaries. Here are some of famous families, mostly mediaeval, with their blazons. Note the order of describing things: the field, then ordinaries and/or subordinaries. Also note the economy of heraldic description.



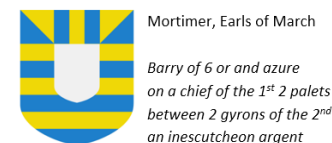
Walsingham
*Paly of 6 argent and sable
a fess gules*



Bruce, Earls of Ailesbury
*Or
a saltire and a chief gules*
(another Bruce has or and azure)*



Ferrers, Earls of Derby
Vairy gules and or



Mortimer, Earls of March
*Barry of 6 or and azure
on a chief of the 1st 2 palets
between 2 gyrons of the 2nd
an inescutcheon argent*



Woodville, Earls Rivers
*Argent
a fess and canton
conjoined gules*



Clifford, Earls of Cumberland
*Chequy or and azure
a fess gules*