

Historical Heraldry!

by Bryon Wischstadt

When the painted shields of warriors began to be recorded into long parchment documents known as "rolls of arms" or *aides-memoires*, heralds established rigid guidelines to govern their recording. The "Historical Heraldry" article in ***Dragon* #275** described some of these rules and offered beautiful examples of how they were applied. Now you can use those images create your own coat of arms!

Below you'll find the various types of marks and images used in historical heraldry. Download and change them or print them and draw on them to create your own heraldry. Check out issue ***Dragon* #275** to learn more.

Abatements

Since a grant of arms could not be easily revoked, the abatement was devised. The addition or change of a charge to the coat of arms symbolized a shameful act or crime. The most widely used abatement is that of treason, usually displayed leading up to and during the accused arminger's execution.

Cadency

When branches of a family, or two armingers had identical arms, they needed to make them different from one another to avoid confusion. To achieve this, the heralds made changes to the arms to distinguish the separate parties. Similarly, the sons of the arms bearer, by order of birth, marked their personal arms to distinguish them from their father's.

The cadency marks for the first nine sons are as follows:

- label (removed after the father's death; a label argent was reserved for the Crown Prince)



- crescent



- molet



- martlet (a bird with feathers for feet)

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- annulet



- fleur-de-lis
- rose
- cross moline



- double quatrefoil (eight leaf-shapes arranged in a circle, tips outward)

Five of these marks are illustrated here.

Honorable Ordinaries

The honorable ordinaries are said to have originated with the fastenings, buckles, and clamps of the shield. They normally occupy up to a third of the surface area of the shield. They are blazoned immediately after the field is described.

Ordinaries

This is the "catch-all" category of ordinaries consisting of those shapes that do not fall into the honorable ordinary or subordinate categories. Ordinaries cover about a fifth of the field. Some of the most common ordinaries are detailed below.

Partition Lines

The lines used to partition the shield are given specific names. If these lines are used to simply divide a shield, it is blazoned "party per" then the division. If used as a charge themselves, they are known as ordinaries.

Subordinaries

Scholars do not agree upon the division between ordinaries and subordinaries. Some say that the subordinaries must use less than one fifth of the field's area. Regardless of the disputed qualifications, many heraldic authorities do agree that the following items are to be considered subordinaries.

Tinctures

Arms are represented by three main groups of tincture: colors, metals and furs. These tinctures are used to describe all elements depicted on a coat of arms, however the actual hue of tincture is up to artist depicting the blazon. This is a tradition that has continued since the time of Medieval heralds when they had to hand mix paints, thus making it nearly impossible to match colors between heralds.

Historical Heraldry! - Abatements

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Boasting of a Deed Never Done



Cowardice



Deserting the King In Battle



Drunkenness



Killing Prisoner Without Cause



Lechery, Adultery



Lying To Your Commander



Revocation of a Challenge

Historical Heraldry! - Honorable Ordinaries

The honorable ordinaries are said to have originated with the fastenings, buckles, and clamps of the shield. They normally occupy up to a third of the surface area of the shield. They are blazoned immediately after the field is described.



Bend



Bend Sinister



Chevron



Chief



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Cross



Quarter

Fess

Pale



Saltire

Pile

Historical Heraldry! - Ordinaries

This is the "catch-all" category of ordinaries consisting of those shapes that do not fall into the honorable ordinary or subsidiary categories. Ordinaries cover about a fifth of the field. Some of the most common ordinaries are detailed below.



Bar



Canton



Escutcheon



Pall

Historical Heraldry! - Partition Lines

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Barry Bendy



Barry Bendy Sinister



Barry



Bendy

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Bendy Sinister



Checky



Chevronny



Lozengy



Paly Bendy



Paly



Party Per Bend



Party Per Bend Sinister



Party Per Chevron



Party Per Cross



Party Per Fess



Party Per Gyron



Party Per Gyronny



Party Per Pale



Party Per Pall



Party Per Saltire

Historical Heraldry! - Subordinaries

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Billet



Bordure



Checky



Flanches



Fret



Fusil



Gutte



Gyron



Inescutcheon



Lozenge



Orle



Roundel

Historical Heraldry! - Tinctures

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Argent



Azure



Generic Shield



Gules

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Or



Purpure



Sable



Sanguine



Tenne



Vert



Ermines



Vairs