

The Use of Heraldry in Genealogical Research

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Heraldry Terminology

Armiger: A person who bears arms.

Armorial: A collection of blazons for arms and/or drawings of arms usually arranged by surname and limited to a nation, region, or event.

Blazon: The technical description of arms.

Cadency: A system used to mark different members of a particular family by birth order.

Canting Arms: A pictorial jest on the surname of the armiger.

Charges: An object borne on a shield or on another charge. Includes ordinaries, sub-ordinaires, and a wide variety of objects, like beasts, flowers, monsters, humans, tools, etc. Ordinaries are basic geometrical charges (Fess, Pale, Bend, Chevron, Cross, Saltire, etc.) and sub-ordinaires are diminutives of ordinaries (Inescutcheon, Orle, Tressure, Bordure, etc.)

Crest: A three-dimensional object mounted on a helmet and often shown in arms with a wreath and mantling. Like mottoes, crests can be changed at will. Crests are often displayed without the arms on jewelry and stationery.

Differencing Arms: A change to arms to indicate cadency.

Escutcheon of Pretence: A small shield showing the arms of a heraldic heiress displayed in the center of her husband's arms. Also, used to indicate a claimed relationship between families.

Funeral Entries: In Irish heraldry the record of arms registered by the Ulster King of Arms at a prominent person's death.

Heraldic Heiress: The daughter of an armiger with no brother. Her children are intitled to quarter her father's arms with her husband's arms.

Impaling Arms: The division of a shield side-by-side (per pale) to display two different arms, usually the husband and the wife's arms.

Marshalling Arms: The ordering of several arms on a shield to indicate marriage, inheritance, office, or claimed connections. It usually involves quartering of arms.

Matriculation: In Scotland, the legal requirement for an heir registers his inherited arms with the Lord Lyon King of Arms.

Ordinary of Arms: Special tool that lets you look up the owner of an arm based on the blazon. Difficult to use without a thorough understanding of how to blazon correctly.

Proofs of Noble Status: In France, evidence submitted to the Judge of Arms or the Genealogist of the King's Orders to prove noble status and/or to enter one of the orders of knighthood or another cherished institution. Arms are often recorded in these documents.

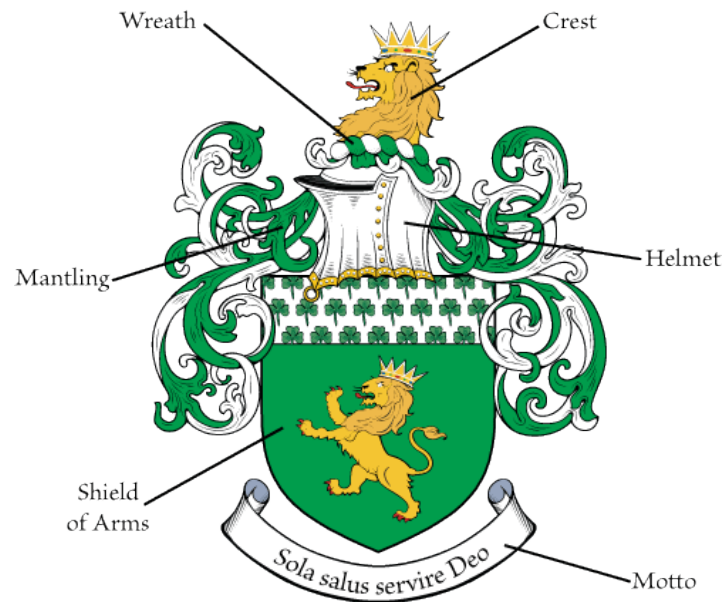
Quartering Arms: The practice of dividing a shield to display more than one coat of arms a person is intitled to own (can be more than just four arms shown).

Roll of Arms: Medieval heralds compiled lists of arms, usually drawings, based on an event or region.

Sigillography: This is the study of seals. Publications dealing with seals often provide the name of the owner, the type of document the seal was attached to, the date, and a description of the seal including any text. However, they usually lack information on tinctures.

Tincture: Colors, metals, and furs used in heraldry. The colors are Gules (red), Azure (blue) Sable (black), Vert (green), etc. The metals are Or (gold or yellow) and Argent (silver or white). The furs are stylized patters representing Ermine (white with black tails), Vair (white with blue pelts), etc. The general rule is that metals appear on colors, not colors on colors or metals on metals.

Visitations: In England, visits by heralds of the College of Arms to particular regions in order to record arms and pedigrees. Used to determine if arms were properly owned.



Parts of a Full Achievement of Arms

For more heraldry examples from my research please visit <http://habitant.org> and <http://mcguinnessfamily.org>.

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