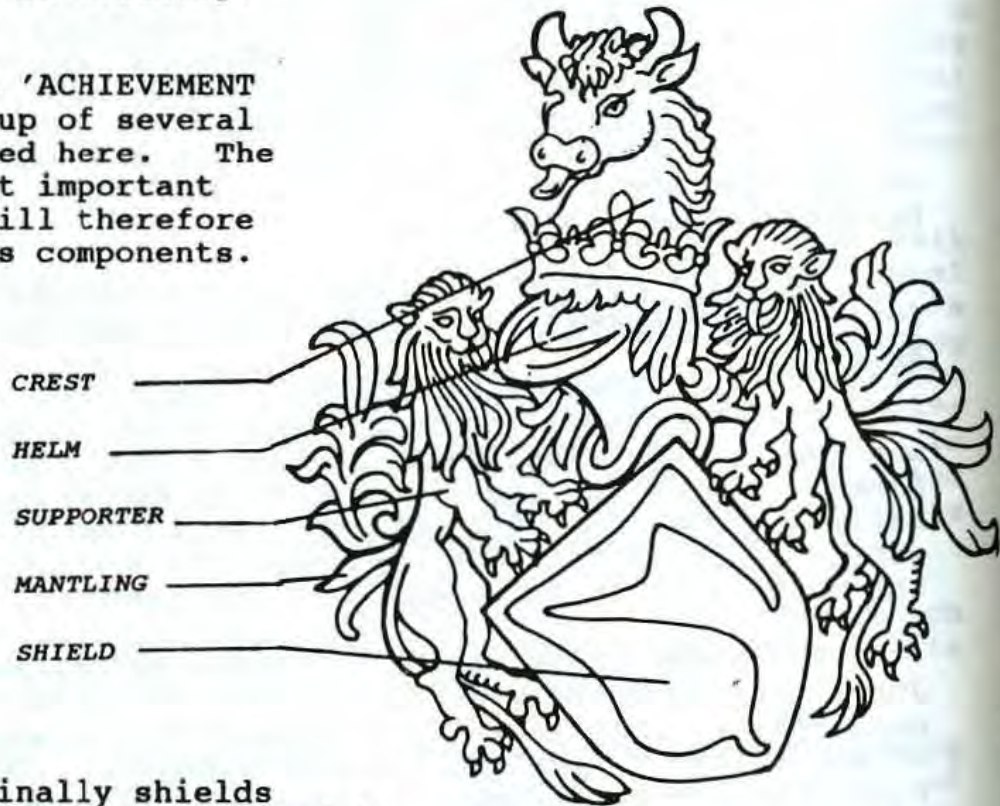


Some time ago the Society spent a considerable sum of money on research at the College of Heralds. This produced a thoroughly well researched answer, which is, however, difficult to understand because of the terminology involved. 'FAMILY NOTES' would like to publish the results of the inquiry, so this introductory article is intended to help members understand the basic ideas and language used in Heraldry.

The complete 'ACHIEVEMENT OF ARMS' is made up of several parts, as indicated here. The shield is the most important feature, and we will therefore concentrate on its components.



**TINCTURES.** Originally shields of arms were specifically designed to be clearly visible in battle, or at a tournament. Therefore a limited range of contrasting colours ('Tinctures') was used; these are still known by their Anglo-French names and fall into 3 groups:

- (1) Colours: Black ('sable')  
Red ('gules')  
Blue ('azure')  
Green ('vert')
- (2) Metals: Gold ('or')  
Silver ('argent')
- (3) Furs: White ('ermine')  
Squirrel ('vair')



Left: *ERMINE*

Right: *VAIR*

It is a rule of heraldry that no colour should be placed upon another colour, or a metal placed on a metal. (A blue design on a black background, or gold on silver, would not be easily identifiable at a distance.)

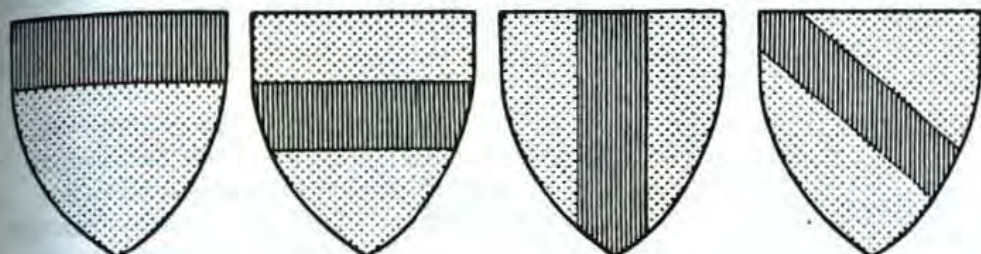
**THE 'FIELD'.** The background of a shield is the 'field'; sometimes in one colour, sometimes covered with devices - crosses, fleurs de lys or billets.



*BILLET*

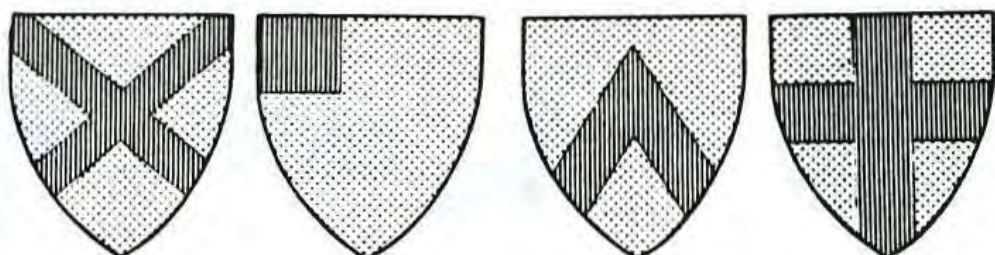


**CHARGES** Any device placed upon a shield is called a 'charge'. The most commonly used charges are simple geometric shapes, known as 'ordinaries'. These dictate the basic structure of almost all shields of arms; these are some of the best known:-



Left to right:  
CHIEF  
FESS  
PALE  
BEND

Left to right:  
SALTIRE  
CANTON  
CHEVRON  
CROSS



An ordinary may be repeated across a shield, in which case it assumes a more slender form and is termed a 'diminutive'. The diminutive of each ordinary has a distinctive name, for example:



BENDY

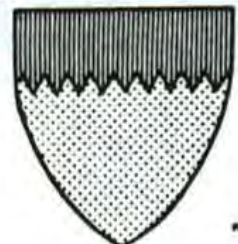
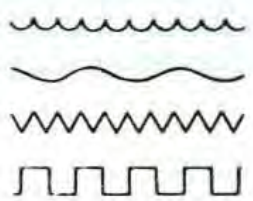
The field may be divided up into areas of contrasting tinctures by lines which follow the direction of the ordinaries. The result is known as a 'party field':



Left to right:  
PARTY PER PALE  
PARTY PER BEND  
PARTY PER SALTIRE

The lines used in heraldry need not always be straight. There are a lot of ornamental variations, such as:

Top to bottom:  
ENGRAILED  
WAVY  
INDENTED  
EMBATTLED



"CHIEF INDENTED"

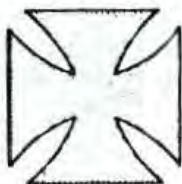


THE ELABORATION OF CHARGES. As heraldry gained in popularity, the original repertoire of charges proved inadequate to prevent the duplication of shields of arms. Early heraldry had used a few pictorial charges, such as the lion and the eagle, or the devices which appeared on 'canting' arms, that is, those which made a visual pun on the name of the bearer. The P\*RR\*TT arms were of this sort; PORRETT/POIRE/PEAR - hence the 3 pears on our crest.

ARMS OF THE  
LUCY FAMILY.  
( 'LUCE' is  
an old name  
for the pike.)

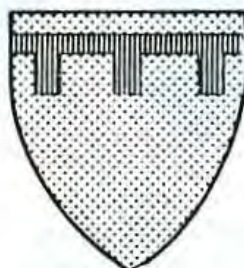


In order to meet the growing demand for coats of arms, many more charges of a pictorial and symbolic nature were adopted, some of which are shown here. In addition to these, practically any other object, animate or inanimate, can be, and has been, used as an heraldic charge.



*SOME PICTORIAL AND SYMBOLIC CHARGES: top row, left to right:- Escallop; martlet (swallow); crescent; lion rampant. Bottom row, left to right: Mullet (spur-rowel); cross crosslet; cross crosslet fitchy; cross formy; eagle; fleur de lys (lily).*

DIFFERENCING AND MARSHALLING OF ARMS. In British heraldry, only the head of a family bears the ancestral coat of arms of that family. His relatives must 'difference', or vary, the family arms in a way which indicates their junior status. The 'label' and the 'bordure' have always been particularly associated with differencing, since they allow the original arms to be changed without greatly affecting their overall appearance. It is common for each son of a family to be assigned a distinct charge to signify his seniority; for example, a 'label' for the eldest son, a crescent for the second son, a mullet for the third, and so on. However, this system of 'cadency marks' has never been strictly applied and many variations exist.



LABEL



BORDURE

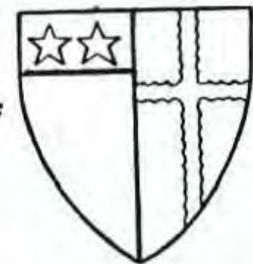


LADIES, it should be noted in passing, do not use the shield in their personal arms. They use the design, but it appears not in the form of a shield, but on a 'lozenge', that is, a diamond shaped background.

MARRIAGE. To denote marriage alliances, the possession of 2 or more lordships by one man and the holding of office, 2 or more distinct coats of arms are combined on one shield. This practice is known as 'marshalling'. An early method of marshalling was 'dimidiation', in which the 2 original shields were cut in half vertically and the right half of one joined to the left half of the other. (see right). Dimidiation was felt to obscure the identity of the original coats of arms and it was superseded by 'impalement', whereby the whole of each of the original arms was placed in the respective half of the new shield. (see right).

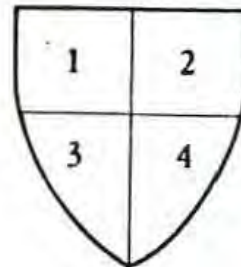


LEFT: DIMIDIATION;  
CREST OF THE CINQUE  
PORTS



RIGHT: IMPALEMENT;  
BACON & UFFORD

An alternative method of marshalling is 'quartering', whereby the shield is divided into 4 quarters and a coat of arms is placed in each quarter. These arms are placed in order of importance. Despite appearances, arms numbers 1 and 2 are described as being on the 'dexter' (right) side of the shield; in heraldry, 'dexter' and 'sinister' (left) are seen from viewpoint of a person standing behind the shield



RIGHT: THE  
QUARTERINGS OF  
EDMUND MORTIMER

If only 2 coats of arms are to be quartered, the principal one appears in the quarters 1 and 4, and the other in quarters 2 and 3. In its basic form, quartering can accommodate up to 4 distinct coats of arms on one shield (right); however, if through successive generations members of a family marry persons entitled to bear arms, considerably more complex shields can result, quartering six, eight, nine, or even more coats of arms.



LEFT: THE  
MANY  
QUARTERINGS  
OF THOMAS  
KNEVETT

In a forthcoming issue of this journal, we will publish the letter about P\*RR\*TT coats of arms, with material taken from mediaeval sources; I hope this article, based on material published by the Trustees of the British Museum, which I gratefully acknowledge, will help members to understand it.