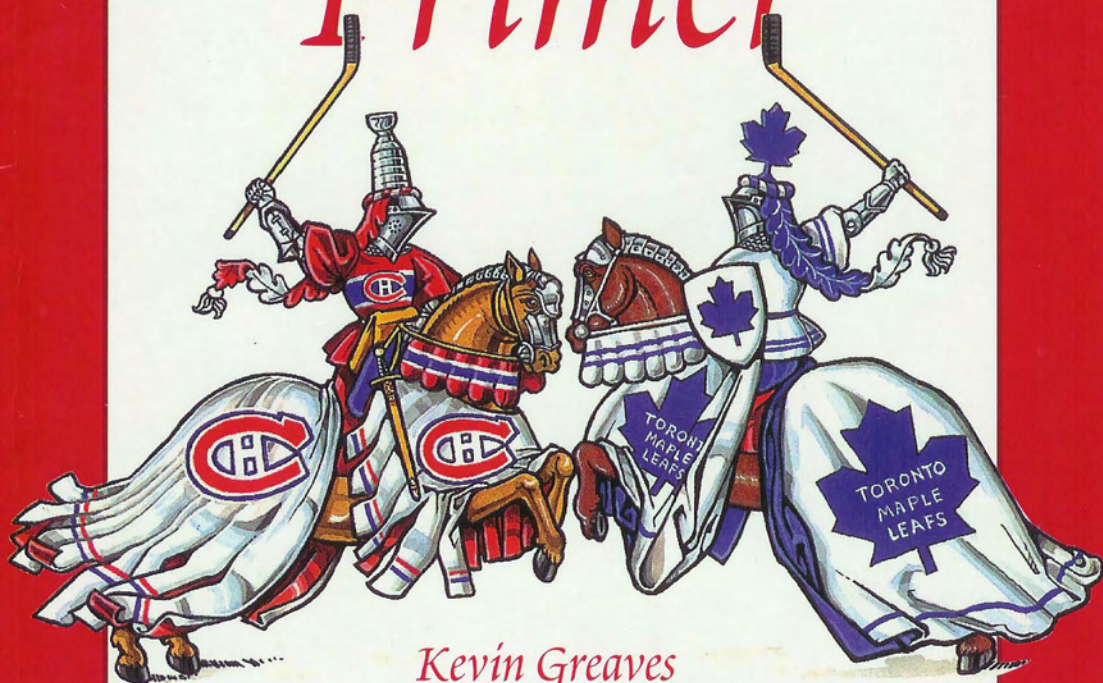


A Canadian Heraldic Primer



Kevin Greaves

Illustrated by Bruce Patterson and Gordon Macpherson

A
Canadian
Heraldic
Primer

Kevin Greaves

Illustrated by
Bruce Patterson and Gordon Macpherson

Published by the
Heraldry Society of Canada

© 2000 The Heraldry Society of Canada and K.W. Greaves

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means—electronic, mechanical, photocopying, microreproduction, recording, or otherwise—without prior written permission of the publisher.

Additional copies of this book can be purchased from:

The Heraldry Society of Canada
P.O. Box 2128, Station T
Ottawa, Ontario, Canada K1G 3H9

Logos of the Toronto Maple Leaf and Montréal Canadiens Hockey organizations are used with their kind permission.

Layout and typography by MacNamara Design, Toronto.
Printed in Canada.

Canadian Cataloguing in Publication Data

Greaves, Kevin, 1931-
A Canadian heraldic primer

Includes bibliographic references.
ISBN 0-9693063-4-2

1. Heraldry. 2. Heraldry—Canada.
I. Heraldry Society of Canada. II. Title.

CR212.G75 2000 929.6 C00-900137-9

Message from the Governor General

As one who has had the pleasure of designing a personal coat of arms, I now understand more clearly some of the concepts that lie behind the magic of this ancient form of art and identity.

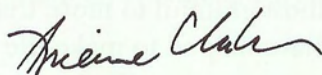
The possibility that we can, through heraldry, represent the ideas closest to our heart and salute important parts of our heritage in an imperishable form, is a powerful and attractive one. More and more Canadians are taking up this idea, as witnessed by the number of requests for new coats of arms received from individuals and institutions each year.

Beyond these are the many thousands who want to know more about heraldry. How did it originate, how is it structured, how is it unfolding and evolving in Canada now that we have our own state authority?

I want to congratulate author Kevin Greaves and the artists, Bruce Patterson and Gordon Macpherson for producing such a lively and amusing introduction to the topic and for including so much material on Canadian heraldry. I am pleased to have my own arms included among the illustrations.

At the same time, I want to congratulate the Heraldry Society of Canada for this important educational initiative. Since 1966, it has played a key role in ensuring that Canadians have access to current information on heraldry and encouraging its proper acquisition, use and display.

With all good wishes for future endeavours.



Adrienne Clarkson
Governor General of Canada



Sponsors

The Heraldry Society would like to express its deepest appreciation to the following foundations and individuals who have sponsored the publication of this book through their generous donations.

FOUNDATION SPONSORS

The W. Garfield Weston Foundation

The Jackman Foundation

The Sovereign Order of St. John of Jerusalem,
Knights Hospitaller, Priory of Eastern Canada

INDIVIDUAL SPONSORS

Ralph Brocklebank	Jean Matheson
Robert Gibson	John Udd
Peter Liddle	Ben Weider
Roger A. Lindsay	John Wilkes
Cyril Woods	

AN ADDITIONAL THANK-YOU

In addition to the sponsors listed above, the Society is most grateful to more than eighty other members who have helped to make the *Primer* a reality through their generous contributions to our education program.

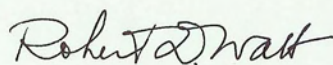
Foreword by the Chief Herald of Canada

There is a small but influential stream linking heraldry and humour in English language heraldic studies since World War II. The leading example of the genre is Moncreiffe and Pottinger's *Simple Heraldry*, a wonderful introduction to the art and science which continues to inform and delight readers in the tens of thousands.

Kevin Greaves, Bruce Patterson and Gordon Macpherson have, to a considerable degree, been inspired by this example with, I think you will agree, fine results. They not only cover known territory in a lively way, but introduce new material in an accessible and very effective manner

But this primer is significant at a deeper level because its essential aim is to reach out to a wider public and to interest those who have heard of heraldry but have only a minimal understanding of it. This worthy objective directly reflects the ongoing mission of the Heraldry Society of Canada to introduce as many Canadians as possible to the magic of heraldry with the ultimate aim of imbedding heraldry more deeply in the Canadian experience. For this reason alone, I am eager to offer congratulations not only to the author and artists but to the Society for the publication of this work.

Those with more knowledge of heraldry, who will also undoubtedly read this, will find much that is familiar, although expressed in a lively and engaging way; but there is important new information too. This is the first book with extensive references to the evolving story of Canadian heraldry. My colleagues and I hope it will be the first of many.



Robert D. Watt
Chief Herald of Canada
The Chancellery
Ottawa, 2000

Preface

This primer is aimed at students and others who may have heard a little about heraldry and are curious about it, but are put off by the seriousness, academic tone and sheer size of the standard heraldic texts—and perhaps by the hushed reverence with which the subject is sometimes discussed by its proponents. Heraldry is a fascinating hobby which is also a great deal of fun and there is no need to take it too seriously. However, like any other hobby, you need to know some facts and background in order to get the most out of it. This book is intended to give a short, slightly irreverent account of heraldry, with the hope of giving at least a flavour of this intriguing subject and perhaps whetting a few appetites.

The primer is published under the auspices of the Heraldry Society of Canada. Membership in the Society is available – and invaluable – to anyone who finds himself (or herself) hooked, as I am, by this ancient art form.

K.W.G.

Hamilton, 2000

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The author and illustrators would be less than gracious if they failed to acknowledge their debt to Iain Moncreiffe and Don Pottinger, the creators of that superb introduction to heraldry, *Simple Heraldry, Cheerfully Illustrated*. They were the first to introduce the saving gift of humour to a subject too often associated with dryness and pedantry. Theirs is deservedly the first book noted in the bibliography.

Contents

Chapter 1: How heraldry got started.....	1
Chapter 2: The heraldic achievement.....	7
Chapter 3: The shield and what goes on it	11
Chapter 4: Other devices	17
Chapter 5: Blazonry—the language of heraldry	23
Chapter 6: The Canadian Heraldic Authority	25
Chapter 7: Corporate arms	29
Chapter 8: Ecclesiastical arms.....	33
Chapter 9: Arms for women.....	37
Chapter 10: Aboriginal heraldry	41
Chapter 11: Unique Canadian heraldry	43
Chapter 12: Designing your own arms	49
Chapter 13: The uses of heraldry	53
Chapter 14: Arms for the future	55
Bibliography.....	56
The Heraldry Society of Canada	56

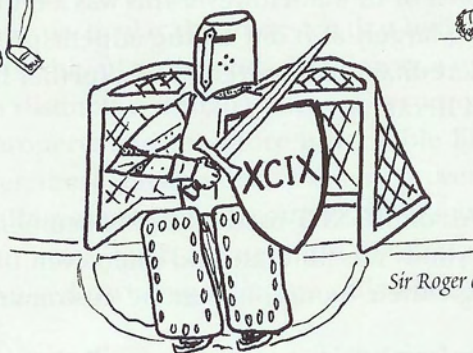
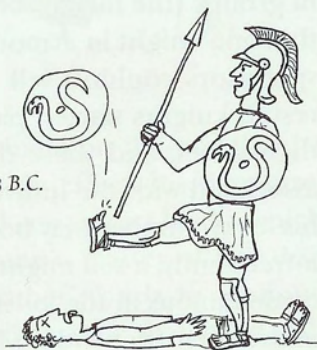
Chapter 1: How heraldry got started

Many people know that the ancient art of heraldry involves designs painted on a shield and used to identify the owner, but how did it start? The shield itself is the oldest form of personal defence and soldiers from time immemorial have decorated their shields in various ways. We know, for instance, that the ancient Greeks painted things on their shields; so was this a form of heraldry? No, not really, because, while such a design might identify the owner of the shield, there was nothing to prevent two people from having identical shields—unless of course, one defeated the other in combat. Moreover, the shield paintings of this early period were not in general passed on from father to son (i.e. hereditary), thereby lacking one of the key features of true heraldry. Heraldry as we understand it really did not develop until some time in the early 1100s, at a time when knights started using closed helmets that completely hid their faces, much as hockey goalies do today.



Pre-heraldry

Pre-heraldic conflict, 503 B.C.



Sir Roger de Gretzky, 1099



Pre-heraldic spectator confusion



THE TOURNAMENT

While the requirements of warfare may have contributed to the process, it was the popularity of the TOURNAMENT that, more than anything else, led to the birth of heraldry. These colourful mock-warfare contests, with all their pomp and panoply, were the great spectator sport of the late Middle Ages—the mediaeval equivalent of hockey or football. Sponsored by the king or one of the great nobles, tournaments featured knights clobbering one another in groups (the *mêlée*) or singly (the joust). The only problem was that one knight in armour looked much like any other, so that the spectators couldn't tell the good guys from the bad guys. As a result, knights started painting things on their shields to identify themselves, and these devices* tended to become permanently associated with the individual knight—in much the same way that his lucky number may become attached to a star athlete today. Not infrequently, a son might wish to use the device that his father had made famous in the joust or in war. However this was a bit hit-and-miss at first (depending largely as it did on the athletic prowess of dear old dad) so the hereditary feature required a further boost to become a fixed part of heraldry.

THE SEAL

That boost was the SEAL or SIGNET used on legal documents. At a time when almost everybody was illiterate and when even the great nobles could rarely sign their names, it became customary for a

* DEVICE and CHARGE are fancy heraldic terms with essentially the same meaning: "thing, when used as a part of a heraldic design."



The Seal in use



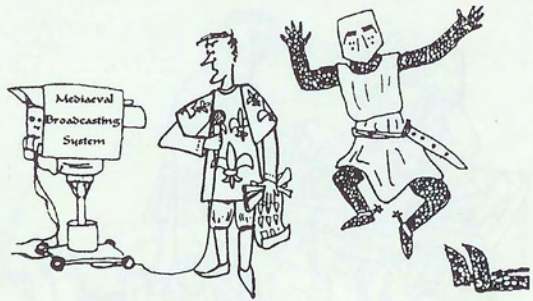
The Seal in transmission



Heraldic conflict, 1390

man to put the distinctive device of his shield on the seal that he used for his civil transactions. It became, in effect, his signature. Since most legal documents of the period concerned land—which was inherited under rigid rules—it became a matter of practical convenience for a son, on inheriting his father's lands, to continue to use the particular shield-device that had become associated with the ownership of those lands. In this way, a man's ARMS (the shield with its distinctive design) became recognized as part of his personal property and therefore inheritable like any other property. However, there was as yet no system to prevent two knights, possibly from different parts of the country, from selecting identical devices for their arms. Such a system did develop quite quickly, however, and involved certain gentlemen called HERALDS.

The Herald as sportscaster



The Herald as bureaucrat

THE HERALDS

Since the king or noble sponsoring a tournament was much too grand to organize and run it himself, he would appoint one of his retainers to do it for him. This officer was known as a HERALD (i.e. announcer or proclaimer) since one of his jobs was to announce the names of the contestants before each bout and to proclaim the winner when it was over, much as a radio or T.V. sportscaster does today. Since the herald could not see the faces of the helmeted knights, he had to rely on the devices on their shields to recognize them. For this reason, he had to familiarize himself with the shield-devices of any knights who might conceivably show up at his tournaments and, eventually, to become *the* knowledgeable expert in the field—a field that was soon to be named HERALDRY.

As more and more knights and nobles began to use arms (some now only for personal identification, quite apart from the tournament), it was natural that they would go to the heralds for advice. This was partly to ensure that their new design was not the same as one already used by another knight, but also to be sure that it was “correct” (note that bureaucracy was already becoming a power in the Middle Ages). So now the heralds were becoming involved, not only with the recognition of arms, but with their design as well.

Eventually however, this form of control by individual heralds proved inadequate and the duplication of arms and consequent disputes—sometimes violent—began to occur. To prevent this, monarchs began to declare that arms could only be granted with royal assent and appointed senior heralds, known as **KINGS OF ARMS**, to look after it for them.

USE ON ACCOUTREMENTS

As heraldry became more and more popular, the shield-design was frequently used on other parts of a knight's accoutrements, as for example on the cloth surcoat that he wore over his armour (which accounts for the term **COAT OF ARMS**). It was also used on the trappings of his horse, on his personal flag or banner and even in the dress of his wife.



Surcoat



Horse



Wife

HERALDIC ACHIEVEMENT



This illustration shows how the elements of a heraldic “achievement” go together. Refer to it while reading Chapter 2. Note that “dexter” (right) and “sinister” (left) are considered from the point of view of the bearer of the shield, not that of the observer.