

## Chapter 4: Other Devices

Almost anything—animal, vegetable, or mineral—can be used as a device on a coat of arms. Since heraldry is a traditional art-form, however, it tends to prefer traditional, timeless devices with well-recognized symbolism. We will deal here with a few of these and with how they are described or **BLAZONED**.

### ANIMALS—THE HERALDIC ZOO

The **LION** was one of the first charges used in heraldry—symbolizing as it does strength and courage—and we can use it as an example. Many heraldic animals are shown, not as they are in nature, but in a stylized, usually super-fierce, form, intended to freak out opponents. The lion is a good example of this. Other animals like the **HORSE** and **DEER** are usually shown more or less naturally. All animals are depicted as facing the dexter side of the shield unless stated otherwise and may be shown in a number of “heraldic” positions. In describing an animal, the position of the body is noted first, then that of the head. The common body positions are **RAM-PANT** or ramping (a position unknown to any self-respecting animal, but *very* heraldic!); **PASSANT** or walking; **STATANT** or standing; and **SEJANT** or sitting. If the head is facing the same way as the body, its position is not mentioned. The two other common head positions are **GUARDANT**, or looking towards the viewer, and **REGUARDANT**, or looking backwards. So, in blazoning a lion, you could have a “*lion rampant*”, a “*lion passant guardant*” or a “*lion statant regardant*”. Sometimes the nature or position of the tail is mentioned as a last item, if there is something unusual about it such as a double tail (**DOUBLE-QUEUED**) or a forked tail (**QUEUE**



A lion rampant



A lion passant  
guardant



A lion statant  
regardant



A lion sejant, queue  
fourchée

FOURCHÉE)—see previous page. Not all animals assume all the heraldic positions and some have special terms applied to them, but the above are the common ones. Other frequently encountered animals are the horse, the dog, the stag, the boar, the wolf and the bear, but *any* animal can qualify, even a mouse.

**BIRDS—THE HERALDIC AVIARY**

As with their four-legged counterparts, *any* bird can appear in a coat of arms, but the most traditional are the EAGLE, the HAWK, the PELICAN and the MARTLET (a type of swallow). We will use the eagle as our example. In blazoning, the bird's general position is mentioned first. The common ones are: CLOSE (standing with wings folded); RISING (facing dexter, wings open); VOLANT (flying); and DISPLAYED. The latter (by far the commonest position for the eagle, but not as common for other birds) shows the bird's body to the front, head turned to the dexter and wings spread out on either side. After the body, the position of the wings is mentioned, such as ELEVATED (tips upwards), INVERTED (tips downwards) or ADDORSED (back to back). A couple of avian peculiarities: the MARTLET is shown as a swallow with no feet, only feathery tufts where the feet should be. The PELICAN (which doesn't look anything like the real thing) is traditionally shown pecking at her own breast to feed her young with drops of blood (VULNING). If shown doing this while on the nest with her young, she is said to be IN HER PIETY.



*An eagle close*



*An eagle rising*



*An eagle volant*



*An eagle displayed*



*A martlet*



*A pelican in her piety*

## MONSTERS—THE HERALDIC MUTANTS

When they ran out of real animals, the mediaeval heralds had a great time with mythical ones, which we now call MONSTERS. Some of these were supposed to be hybrids between *real* creatures, like the GRIFFIN (lion's body; eagle's head, claws and wings) and the SEA-HORSE (horse's head and neck, fish's tail), while some were pure inventions, such as the UNICORN and the DRAGON. In general, monsters are blazoned similarly to other beasts, but a few had special terms applied to them; a griffin, for example, is never described as rampant but as SEGREANT, goodness knows why.



A griffin segreant



A seahorse sejant



A unicorn rampant



A dragon passant

## FLOWERS—THE HERALDIC GARDEN

In most cases, flowers are shown naturalistically and described accordingly. Two of the most common, however, have stylized features and terminology. The rose, perhaps the commonest heraldic flower, is generally shown conventionally with five petals, five intervening sepals (BARBS) and a cluster of SEEDS (actually stamens) in the centre. It may also be shown with a short stem (SLIPPED) and one or two leaves (LEAVED). Unless the rose is described as "proper", the tincture of each of these parts should be mentioned. The TUDOR ROSE is depicted as a red rose (for Lancaster) on which is superimposed a white rose (for York). The lily, while it *may* be shown as the natural flower, is more characteristically depicted as the stylized FLEUR-DE-LIS. This was the emblem of the French royal regime and is not infrequently used in Quebec arms.



A rose barbed  
and seeded proper



A rose slipped  
and leaved



A Tudor rose



A fleur-de-lis

**TREES—THE HERALDIC FOREST**

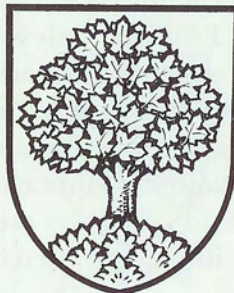
The TREE is a common device and may be represented just as a generic “tree” or as a specific type. In the latter case it is often shown bearing fruit such as acorns or pine-cones that identify its type. Such a tree is said to be FRUCTED of the fruit in question (e.g. “an oak tree fructed of acorns”). In these cases the fruit (and the leaves if recognizable) are usually drawn much bigger than they would be in reality. The trunk of the tree may be shown cut off square (COUPED) or torn out by the roots (ERADICATED). (The former term may also be used to describe parts of animals or humans that are separated sharply from the body, such as “a man’s hand coupé at the wrist”. Where the parts are apparently ripped apart, the term used is ERASED).



*A pine tree coupé*



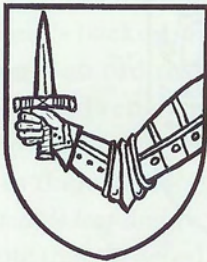
*An oak tree fructed of acorns  
and eradicated*



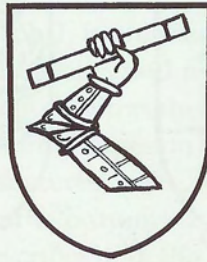
*A maple tree,  
arising from a mount*

**ARMOUR AND WEAPONS—THE HERALDIC ARMOURY**

Armour and weapons are frequently seen, especially—as one would expect—in mediaeval arms. In general, they do not pose any problems of description, but there are a few special terms that apply. An arm encased in armour is said to be **VAMBRACED**. If the hand is also armoured, it is said to be **GAUNTLETED**. Arms bent at the elbow or legs bent at the knee are described as **EMBOWED**. Limbs, along with swords, spears and other long weapons need to have their *direction* indicated, using the suffix *-wise* along with the name of the ordinary whose line they follow, such as **PALEWISE**, **FESSWISE** or **BENDWISE**. If there are a number of limbs or weapons (or other objects for that matter), their arrangement on the shield is also described using the term *in* followed by the name of an ordinary—such as **IN PALE**, **IN FESS**, **IN BEND** and so forth. Thus it would be possible to have *three swords palewise* (pointing up and down) *in fess* (arranged in a horizontal line), or *three swords fesswise in pale*, which would be the opposite. The position of the point should also be noted (e.g. **POINT UPWARDS** or **TO DEXTER**) as well as the tincture of the **HILT** and/or the **POMMEL**.



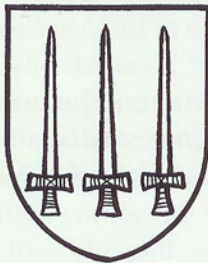
*A dexter arm vambraced and gauntleted, embowed fesswise*



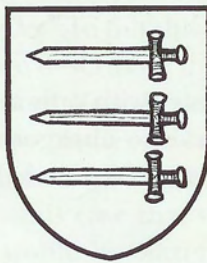
*A dexter arm vambraced and embowed palewise*



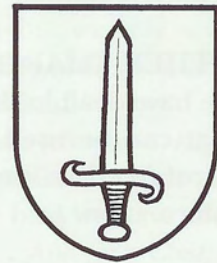
*Three dexter arms vambraced, embowed fesswise in pale*



*Three swords palewise in fess, points upwards*



*Three swords fesswise in pale, points to dexter*



*A sword palewise point upwards, hilted or*

**HEADS AND LIMBS—  
THE HERALDIC AMPUTATION CLINIC**

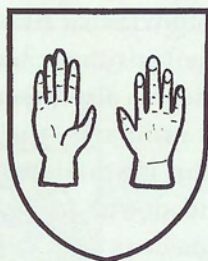
The human figure is quite common in heraldry, but generally is described in ordinary language. Disembodied human heads, arms and legs, however, were quite popular with our ancestors and they *do* have their own terminology, some of which is illustrated below. Heads and limbs are generally assumed to be **COUPED** unless stated to be **ERASED**. An animal's head shown full-faced with no neck is said to be **CABOSHED**.



*A man's head in profile,  
couped at the neck*



*Three arms embowed,  
conjoined at the fess point  
and habited*



*Dexter hands apaumy  
and aversant*



*A human leg  
erased at the thigh*



*A stag's head caboshed*

**OTHER CHARGES**

We have dealt in this chapter with only a tiny fraction of the items that can be used as heraldic charges. The interested reader is referred to one of texts in the bibliography for further information.