

# HERALDIC DEVICES

Introduced during the Middle Ages, heraldic devices were used as a means to distinguish friend from foe on the battlefield. The surcoats worn by medieval soldiers sported various insignia that were commemorative of mythological beasts or incidents of valor. The designs used in heraldry became increasingly symbolic and standardized.

The term *coat of arms* is derived from the heraldic bearings that were worn on a medieval knight's surcoat. In today's Army, a unit's coat of arms provides its soldiers with a sense of identification, inspiration and unity of purpose.

A complete coat of arms consists of a shield, a crest and a motto. The shield is the most important heraldic item. It contains the field or ground on which the charges (figures) are placed. Originally, a leader wore the crest on top of his helmet so that his soldiers could easily identify him. The leader would attach the crest to his helmet with a piece of cloth. Today that cloth is represented by a wreath of six skeins or twists composed of alternating twists of the principal metal and principal color of the shield. Upon this wreath lies the crest. The motto is usually of an idealistic nature and sometimes refers to a well-known event in the history of the organization.

## Glossary of Heraldic Terms

**Affronty:** a heraldic figure facing to the front

**Argent:** the heraldic color silver, often represented in white

**Azure:** the heraldic color blue

**Barry:** the heraldic field divided into an even number of horizontal bars of two alternating colors

**Bend:** a diagonal band across the heraldic field

**Charge:** a figure borne on a heraldic field

**Chevron:** a heraldic figure like an inverted "V" emerging from the base of the shield

**Chief:** the uppermost part of a heraldic field

**Cotise:** narrow stripes of similar design alongside a bend

**Counterchanged:** having the colors exchanged mutually

**Counterpotente:** interlocking T-shaped crosses

**Crusilly fitchy:** cross-crosslets with pointed lower ends sprinkled upon a heraldic field

**Cubit Arm:** cut in a straight line at the elbow

**Dexter:** the right side of a heraldic field (as viewed by the person carrying the shield)

**Embattled:** indicative of the cutout shape of the battlements of a fortress or castle

**Embowed:** an arm or leg bent with the elbow or knee

**Epi:** of a spiked or tufted shape

**Erased:** a figure depicted with jagged edges as if torn off

**Escalloped:** a figure depicting a scallop shell with the fluted edge pointing downward and the convex side of the shell toward the spectator

**Eyed:** a figure having markings suggestive of eyes

**Fanwise:** displayed like a fan

**Fess:** a horizontal bar drawn across the middle of a heraldic field

**Fessway/Fesswise:** a figure horizontally positioned on the heraldic field

**Field:** the ground within the borders of the shield on which heraldic figures are placed

**Fimbriated:** a heraldic figure, usually a bend, having a narrow border of a specified heraldic

**First:** the upper left quadrant of a shield divided into four parts

**Fourth:** the bottom right quadrant of a shield divided into four parts

**Garb:** a figure representing a sheaf of grain

**Guardant:** a heraldic beast whose head is turned toward the spectator

**Gules:** the heraldic color red

**Gyronny:** triangular or wedge-shaped figures, having the angles at the fess point and continuing all the way around the shield

**Hurst:** a heraldic figure representing a clump of trees

**Incensed:** rage depicted in a heraldic beast by fire issuing from its mouth and eyes

**Langued:** a heraldic beast depicted with its tongue visible and of a specified color

**Lipped:** a figure having markings suggestive of lips

**Masoned:** the lines formed by the junction on stones in a building

**Mullet:** a five-pointed star

**Mural Crown:** a heraldic figure depicting an open crown with an embattled upper rim

**Or:** the heraldic color gold

**Pairle:** a Y-shaped figure in which three heraldic bearings (one bendwise, one bendwise sinister, and one palewise) join at a common point near the center of the field

**Pale:** a perpendicular band down the middle of a shield

**Paleways/Palewise:** a heraldic figure positioned vertically

**Pallets:** a narrow pale

**Paly:** a charge divided into four or more equal parts by perpendicular bands of alternating colors

**Parti:** signifies that the surface of the shield is divided

**Passant:** walking along, always depicted in a side view

**Pile:** a triangular wedge placed vertically with the broad end up

**Potente:** a T-shaped heraldic cross

**Proper:** anything represented in its natural color

**Quatrefoil:** a stylized representation of a flower having four petals

**Sable:** the heraldic color black

**Saltire:** an X-shaped heraldic figure

**Second:** the upper right quadrant of a shield divided into four parts

**Sinister:** the left side of a heraldic field (as viewed by the person carrying the shield)

**Vert:** the heraldic color green

**Wreath:** twisted strips of alternating colors