

Late Medieval Queens' Heraldry: Adaptation of Presentation to Australasian Convention Richard III Society: April 2007.

It's amazing – you spend several months trying to find the correct blazoning of the arms of quite well-known people in English history – these were four of her queens, for Heaven's sakes – do the best you can, use little pictures and make educated guesses at the actual style of things, justify that's what the real heralds did, get the pages laminated and FOUR HOURS LATER.... You find a web-site that (1) tells you what you need to know & (2) tells you that you have gone wrong.

As this was originally given as a talk to the Convention in April 2007, I had illustrated the talk with banners of the queens' arms, and referred to these as I spoke. I have tried to re-write the piece with descriptions that, hopefully, make a little bit of sense. You can always draw them up yourselves from the descriptions! And, as you might remember, I had five banners showing for four queens, as I found a better illustration for Anne Neville after I had laminated the first one.

I really enjoyed JL Laynesmith's 2004 biography of the last four medieval queens of England, and I enjoy heraldry, so what a good theme for a talk for the conference! So these banners, complete with "rockets" or "flying fish" – my children and the 8 year old next door were deeply impressed by the whole drawing thing but had never seen a fleur-de-lis – are here to illustrate these ladies' heraldic arms. This only emphasises why there were rules of blazon – no tincture on tincture, no metal on metal, no fur on fur – because from a distance the lack of contrast makes them incredibly hard to see. And it also explains why no medieval or later herald would ever use coloured pencils, even if they were available in Richard's time, because the colour saturation is too low. They do not make a vivid display from across the room, but you're welcome to have a better look later.

Margaret of Anjou:

The whole point of heraldry was initially easy identification of leaders on the battlefield, and then it developed through medieval times as a means of identification full stop. So it needed to show who a person was, not just as name but as a line of descent and identity. The idea is the same as Maori people being able to recite their whakapapa – a list of their ancestors. So a grand lady like Margaret, marrying into a foreign country, needed to show these foreigners who she was by descent as well as showing them her queenly behaviour in her own right.

In each case, these are the queens' arms, and all would have been impaled with their husbands' royal arms – France modern quartered with England. They would have been displayed often, to show that the royal couple was present, owned something, was represented by someone (an ambassador perhaps), as donors of a building or chantry chapel – you name it; the arms were shorthand for the people.

While re-writing this for distribution to all the convention attendees, I was struck by how beautifully clear and concise heraldic description is – compare the lengths of the “correct” description and my “explaining” description.....

Back to Margaret. She was the daughter of René of Anjou, who was titular king of Jerusalem, so shows her father's arms. Even though there are six divisions, they are still called “quaterings”, and they are numbered differently by different sources. This is because I didn't do my research well enough to find the definitive answer, as heraldry is supposed to be definitive so you do not mix up two people who might or might not be related.

The kingdom of Hungary: *Barry of eight argent and gules – eight horizontal bars alternately coloured silver and red.*

The kingdom of Naples – aka Old Anjou --- *France Ancient a label of three gules (or five) (4)– a blue field scattered with gold fleurs-des-lis with a red bar with three (or five) small stripes hanging from it at the top of the design.*

Bar: *Azure two barbells haurient addorsed and crusilly or within a bordure gules – a blue field covered with small golden*

crosses with two vertically-swimming gold barbell fish back-to-back all surrounded by a red border.

Anjou: *France Ancient within a bordure gules – the blue field with fleurs-des-lis as above but surrounded by a red border.*

Lorraine: *Or on a bend gules three eaglets displayed argent – on a gold background a red diagonal band from top left to bottom right with three little silver eagles with outstretched wings on it.*

Jerusalem: *Argent a cross potent between four plain crosses or – on a silver ground a large gold cross with T-shaped ends surrounded by four smaller ordinary gold crosses.*

The Queens' College website says that the cross potent is a visual pun on the letters "H" and "I" for the word "Hiersulaem". The arms of Jerusalem are unusual in that they use gold on silver – metal on metal – which breaks the rules of heraldry. This is because Jerusalem is a sacred place – the arms of the Vatican do the same thing to-day – and you can again see why the no-metal-on-metal rule exists because this is really hard to distinguish. I did find one reference that the arms of Jerusalem could be gules on argent, red crosses on a white ground, which would be easier to see, and that they had been recorded as gold in error when all the coloured manuscripts had faded their red into a dirty, brownish yellow, but I don't think that this is credible. Making an exception to heraldic rules for Jerusalem sounds much more likely, and arms were known pretty continuously from their inception, rather than someone many hundreds of years later looking at an allegedly faded document.

The quarters have been numbered (1-3, 4-6) across from the top - right to left – then the bottom – right to left - as Hungary, Naples, Bar, Anjou, Lorraine and Jerusalem, or Hungary, Naples, Jerusalem, Anjou, Bar and Lorraine. There is some justification for some inconsistency in numbering quarterings if they are deemed to be equally important, but the whole point is to display your connections with famous people and how important you are, so the important line would often be displayed in a more important position than the line of the male descent – which should normally be in the first quarter. Some examples of this are England – with France 1 and 4, with England 2 and 3, as Edward III considered France the more important country – and in Anne Neville's arms we'll see later.

As Margaret is a foundress of Queens' College, Cambridge, her arms are still displayed there. The College has adopted her arms differenced by a *bordure vert.* – a green border.

Elizabeth Woodville:

She impaled her paternal arms with John Grey during her first marriage, as one normally would. When she became queen, she was granted permission to use a similar pattern of arms to those of Margaret of Anjou, so the gesture of her current status, mimicking her predecessor as queen, could present the noble European ancestry expected of a queen. She wasn't some no-body – her mother was related to many great houses – remember the guests at her coronation jousting tournament?

St Pol of Luxembourg: *Argent a lion rampant double queued gules crowned or* – on a silver background a red two-tailed lion, wearing a gold crown – rearing up on his hind legs looking straight in front of himself.

Baux: *Quarterly 1 and 4 gules a star argent, 2 and 3 azure semy-de-lis or* – divided into four, the top right and bottom left are red with a silver star; the top left and bottom right are blue covered with many golden fleurs-des-lis.

Lusignan-Cyprus: *Barry of ten argent and azure over all a lion rampant gules* – the background is divided into ten horizontal stripes alternately silver and blue, with a red lion rearing up on his hind legs looking straight in front of him over this.

Ursins: *Gules three bendlets argent a chief per fess of the second and or charged with a rose of the first* – a red background with three silver diagonal stripes from the top right to bottom left. At the top of the shield, effectively the top quarter, divided horizontally silver and gold a red rose centrally placed.

St Pol: *Gules three pallets vairée on a chief or a label of five points azure* – a red background with three vair (blue and white pattern) vertical stripes covered overall at the top with a blue horizontal stripe with five short vertical stripes hanging down from it.

Woodville: *Argent a fess and canton conjoined gules* – silver background with a red horizontal stripe taking up the middle third of the

ground joined to a red rectangle, one-ninth of the shield, in the top left corner.

So her paternal arms are in the sixth quarter. I like the Woodville arms – they're a simple design which shows what some clever heralds could produce – clear, concise, different, easy to see at a distance – see how they are made up and described to produce an L shape.

Jacquetta, Duchess of Bedford, bore the arms of St Pol of Luxembourg quartered with Baux, so Elizabeth enlarged on these to show her mother's lineage. The efforts made in Elizabeth's coronation to draw attention to Jacquetta's grand connections and lineage were therefore sustained in the subsequent constructions of Elizabeth's identity as queen. As Laynesmith says, "The success of this strategy is suggested by the frequency with which chroniclers made reference to her as Jacquetta's daughter as well as Rivers's. Occasionally she was identified only as her mother's daughter, as in the Short English Chronicle, probably written soon after her coronation, which simply called her "the duchess daughter of Bedford". "

I'll just quickly explain how Jacquetta was connected to some of these arms. (5) Jacquetta of Luxembourg, aka Jacquetta zu St Pol (so St Pol and St Pol of Luxembourg) was the daughter of Pierre I of Luxembourg, Count of St Pol, Brienne and Conservan, and Marguerite de Balso aka Marguerite de Baux. Marguerite's mother was the daughter of Francesco de Balso, Duke of Andria and Sueve d'Ursins. Sueve was the heiress of Nicholas d'Ursins, so her children inherited his arms.

Elizabeth Woodville's arms became the model for the arms of Henry VIII's English-born queens. According to Sandford, she became the first English subject to multiply quarterings (1), and I assume that means that he didn't consider Margaret of Anjou her husband's subject (;-)) and that he also meant that prior to this time, quartering meant dividing into quarters not more than four parts.

Anne Neville:

We know that Anne and Isabel were the co-heirs of their father (who has inherited the title of Earl of Salisbury from his mother) and their mother. Although she was still alive, the rules of displaying your wife's arms if she were an heraldic heiress were different than if she weren't, Warwick and his royal-by-marriage daughters needed to show their important heritage rather than being descended from a fecund northern earl by his second marriage.

Anne shows what we call "grand quarters" – quarters that are quartered themselves.

First: Beauchamp and Newburgh

Second: Montague and Monthermer.

Third: Neville.

Fourth: Clare and Despencer

In another description, the first and fourth quarters were identical:

Beauchamp and Newburgh quartered with Clare and Despencer
But separating them out still gives importance to Clare & Despencer –
you repeat the first quarter if you have too few arms to fill the number of
divisions you have, but the fourth quarter is second only to the first in
terms of importance.

The Rous Roll, possibly because it is a small illustration shows seven small quarters, rather than three sets of grand quarters. The Rous Roll celebrates the family of the Earls of Warwick, which was eventually represented by Isabel and Anne Neville. In fact, Isabel's arms in the Rous Roll are far more complex than the illustration of Anne's, showing more lines of descent – again illustrating that there was some artistic licence in heraldic display which the old-time heralds would have disliked. In the Rous Roll, Anne's Neville arms are differenced by a label, but this is absent in the illustration of her arms in the copy of Vegetius's "De Re Militari". (1).

Newburgh –*Checky azure and or a chevron ermine* – the background a check pattern of blue and gold with a chevron – like an upside-down V – of silver scattered with black ermine tips like the fur:

The original **Beauchamp** arms were *Gules a fess between six cross-crosslets or* - a red background with a horizontal gold band in the centre surrounded by three gold cross-crosslets – a cross with its ends made into little crosses - above it and another three below it - and these were borne by Thomas Beauchamp, Earl of Warwick (1345-1401). Richard Beauchamp, Earl of Warwick, the father-in-law of Warwick the Kingmaker, bore his ancestor's Beauchamp arms quartering Newburgh set with an escutcheon of pretence of Clare quartered Despencer.(6). This was seen on his Garter-stall plate of 1423. An escutcheon of pretence is a small shield of the wife's family arms centred in the middle of the main shield as if it is covering it. This is because the husband "pretends" to be the head of the family of his wife if she is an heiress. The Newburgh connection is that the Earls of Warwick were of the Newburgh family until Alice Beaumont married William Beauchamp. So his garter-plate showed his descent from Beauchamp and Newburgh, and that his wife, Isobel Despencer, was a co-heir with her sisters to her father, the previous Despencer Earl of Gloucester. So, by the rules of heraldry, their son, Henry the only Duke of Warwick – Anne Beauchamp's brother, Anne Neville's uncle Henry – was entitled to quarter his parents' arms as he was heir to both of them. So his sister, his heir after his daughter died, brought her husband money, a title and arms: Beauchamp quartering Clare and Newburgh quartering Despencer. Richard (the Kingmaker) also bore Neville – his father's arms, and Montague quartering Monthermer, from his mother, the heiress to the Earldom of Salisbury.

The **Despencer** arms, as far back as Hugh le Despencer, the Earl of Winchester, was *Quarterly argent and gules, two and three a fret or overall a bend sable* – the background split into four quarters, the top left and bottom right silver and the other two red. On the red quarters, a gold fret – like an interlaced diamond and saltire – and over the whole shield a black diagonal line from top left to bottom right. (3). Although on fret was described in the arms, in the fifteenth century, English heralds started to use the description "fretty" and then the shield was covered in fretwork. (7).

The **Montague** arms, *Argent three fusils joined fesswise gules* – a silver background with three red diamonds joined together at their side points

so the three of them make a horizontal line across the shield - were borne by Sir Simon de Montacute in the fourteenth century. The Montagues became the Earls of Salisbury, so the Kingmaker inherited this from his mother who died about 1462. There was some discussion in the fifteenth century as how to describe this shield, as it could be three fusils – thin lozenges – or maybe *a fess engrailed of three points*, which is a horizontal band across the middle of the shield with three points above and below. The difference is really that the fusils look thinner and the fess engrailed looks fatter.

The **Monthermer** arms also came to Richard Neville via his mother. It's hard to draw the eagle displayed, with his wings up, in a small space, but that's how eagles are distinguished from other birds. Sir Ralf de Monthermer, *Or an eagle displayed vert armed gules* – a gold background with a green eagle with red claws and beak, his wings outstretched - styled himself the Earl of Gloucester in right of his wife Joan, daughter of Edward I who was the widow of Gilbert de Clare, Earl of Gloucester. He used two coats of arms, this – his one – and the Clare arms, when he was leading the family on behalf of his step-son.

Sir Edmund de **Neville**, High Sheriff of Lancaster between 1315 and 1317, bore *Argent a saltire gules* – a red St Andrew's cross on a silver background – the colours were reversed by the cadet, the junior, branch of the Neville family, the Nevilles of Raby. Warwick the Kingmaker's father had to distinguish this further by adding a label as the senior branch of the Nevilles of Raby were of course the Earls of Westmoreland. And I've read – on the net, mind you – and after laminating my illustrative banners – that the label might be *checky argent and azure* (check pattern of silver and blue) or plain *or* (gold).... Thanks to the Victoria Branch, after I had this laminated, I found your reference to Warwick's arms in your "Ricardus Rex" newsletter, and produced this banner....so checky it is!

Elizabeth of York:

Now, this is another use of heraldry – heraldry as propaganda. If Elizabeth was the daughter of the King of England, she'd be called "Princess Elizabeth" - Elizabeth of York is the daughter of the Duke of York, isn't she? Think of Princesses Beatrice and Eugenie OF YORK or Princesses Elizabeth and Margaret Rose OF YORK whose uncle was Edward VIII. But thanks to the Tudors, Henry VII's queen is from a ducal house only – OK, a Royal Duke but still. And the arms that her husband approved show that!

As Edwards's heir, Elizabeth should have been entitled to use the Royal arms of England. But had she and the king both used the Royal arms, it might have implied a joint sovereignty, so Elizabeth and her sisters quartered their father's royal arms with those of his Mortimer and De Burgh ancestors. These were the families through which Edward claimed the throne. As Laynesmith says, "Notably, there were no references to the Woodville lineage". The queen's arms still celebrated her royal lineage, which was so important to her husband and her son, even without implying that there was a joint sovereignty. You might have seen the illustration of the banners accompanying the funeral of Elizabeth I, or the funeral of Henry VIII, showing their claims to sovereignty through Elizabeth of York. Laynesmith comments that, as her sisters bore the same arms, they could be seen as a threat to Tudor sovereignty. Henrician paranoia did have a base!

So: 1: **France and England** quarterly

2 and 3: **De Burgh**: *Or a cross gules* – a red cross on a gold background

4: **Mortimer**: *O three bars azure on a chief of the first three pallets between two gyrons of the second overall an inescutcheon argent* – a gold background with three thin horizontal blue stripes. In the top quarter of the shield, three small vertical rectangles between two triangles – all in blue – and a silver shield over all.

These appear as the arms on the foot of her tomb, but in the Lady Chapel at Winchester her husband's royal arms are impaled (placed next to each other vertically so the husband's arms are on the left side as the viewer sees it, and the wife's on the right) **France and England quarterly on the dexter side with Mortimer and de Burgh on the sinister.**

So, each of these ladies used her arms, or had them used, to illustrate who she was, where she came from in terms of her family, and how important she was to her husband and family. Royal arms have always been a law until themselves to a certain extent, as the monarch is the “fount of all honours” and can, well, not quite make up the rules as he or she goes along, these arms show that arms that the monarchs could use would be frowned on if used by a commoner – Elizabeth Woodville’s being the best example.

I am sure that more correct descriptions are out there, but I hope that this talk has given you some insight into how these queens saw themselves, and how they wanted their subjects to see them.

Thank you.

Annette Morgan, May 2007.

References:

1: “Late Medieval Queens”, J.L.Laynesmith, OUP, 2004. pp183-186.

2: Website of Queens’ College, Cambridge

3: Classical Heraldry website (page 16)

4: “Heraldry; Sources, Symbols and Meanings”, O. Neubecker,
McGraw-Hill, 1976.

5: The Peerage.com

6: “Heraldry: Love to Know Encyclopaedia” 1911, Internet source.

7: www.jcsm.org/StudyCenter/heraldry

