The Washington Flag Congress 2011

British Royal Banners 1199 – Present

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Abstract

The presentation begins with the (accepted) date of 1199, the death of King Richard I, the first king known to have used the three gold lions on red. It continues to show how King Edward III added the French Royal Arms, consequent to his claim to the French throne. There is then the change from "France Ancient" to "France Modern" by King Henry IV in 1405, which set the pattern of the arms and the standard for the next 198 years. The story then proceeds to show how, over the ensuing 234 years, there were no fewer than six versions of the standard until the adoption of the present pattern in 1837. The presentation includes pictures of all the designs, noting that, in the early stages, the arms appeared more often as a surcoat than a flag. There is also some anecdotal information regarding the various patterns.

Anne (1702–1714)

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British Royal Banners 1199 – Present

Figure 1 Introduction

The presentation begins with the (accepted) date of 1199, the death of King Richard I, the first king known to have used the three gold lions on red. Although we often refer to these flags as Royal Standards, strictly speaking, they are not standard but heraldic banners which are based on the Coats of Arms of the British Monarchs.

Figure 2 William I (1066–1087)

The first use of the coats of arms would have been exactly that, worn as surcoats by medieval knights. They only gradually became used as banners in the mid-12th century, and only became established as a practice in the early 13th century. In York Museum England there is a picture of William the Conqueror deeding a large part of Yorkshire to Alain of Brittany. The interest point is that William is wearing a surcoat of red, with two gold lions. This harks back to the two lions of the Dukedom of Normandy, representing Normandy and Maine.

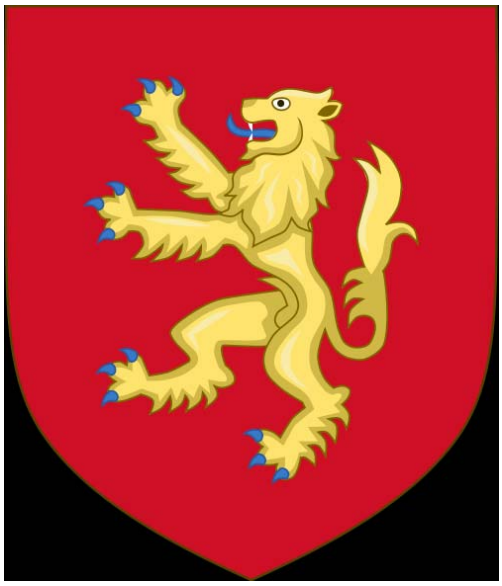

Figure 3 Henry II (1154–1189)

Henry II was a great grandson of William the conqueror, and Count of Anjou, Duke of Normandy and Duke of Aquitaine. He is thought to have the first proven arms for an English monarch, a single lion rampant, but it is possible that he might have used three lions passant guardant during his reign.

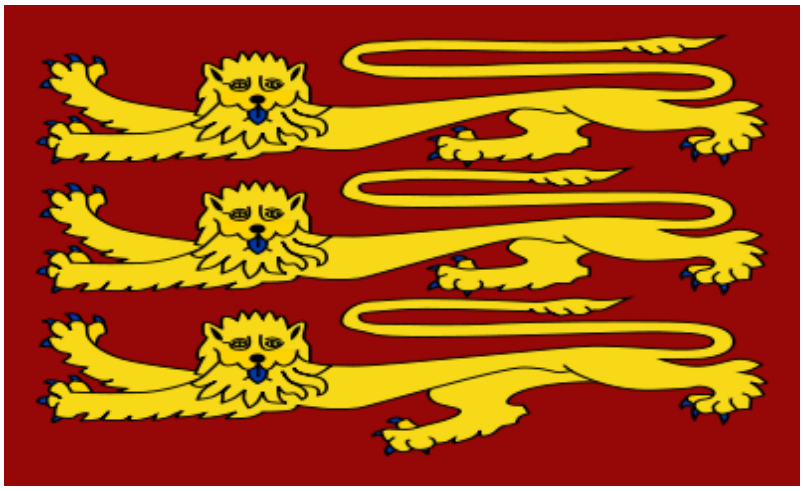

Figure 4 Richard I (1189–1199)

It is recorded that in 1198, Richard I the Lionhearted had a single rampant lion in his seal, and on his shield, three lions passant guardant reportedly representing England, Normandy, and Aquitaine. This banner continued in use until 1340. It is clear that further research is required to establish which sovereign was the first to use three lions and if the lions can be attributed to specific provinces in France.

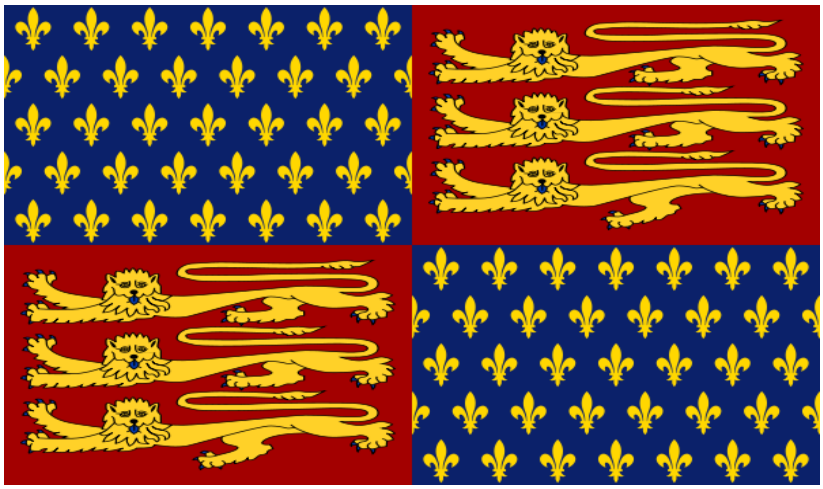

Figure 5 Edward III (1327–1377)

The addition of the French lilies to the Royal Arms in 1340 by Edward III was to make his claim to the throne of France through his mother's line. To emphasise this, he placed them in the first and fourth quarters. King Philip IV of France made a comment on this, which suggested in part that he had not seen a correct drawing of the new English arms: "It does not displease us that our kinsman has chosen to bear the arms of England and France quartered, for we freely permit that a poor knight bachelor kinsman of ours should carry a part of our royal crest. However, we are much disturbed that he should ... call himself on his seal and his letters, King of England before King of France, and that he should have chosen to place his own arms ... in the first quarter of his shield, since it suggests that he considers the little island of England more to be honoured than the great Kingdom of France." This must be the single most venomous piece of sarcasm ever to pass between rulers. Edward's reply is not recorded and perhaps just as well. He was a man of very short temper.

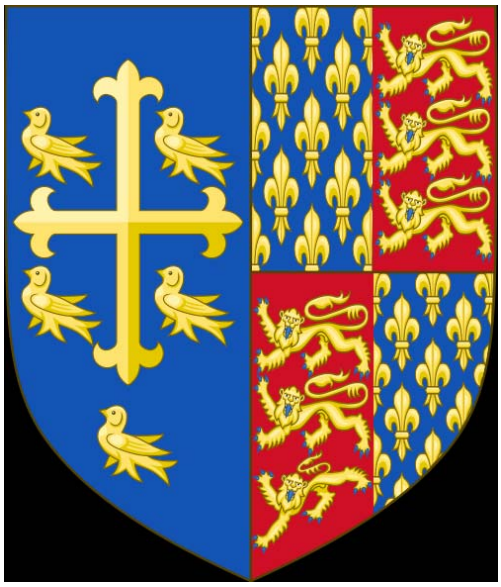

Figure 6 Richard II (1377–1399)

Edward III was succeeded by Richard II. He impaled the Royal Arms with Edward the Confessor's coat of arms.

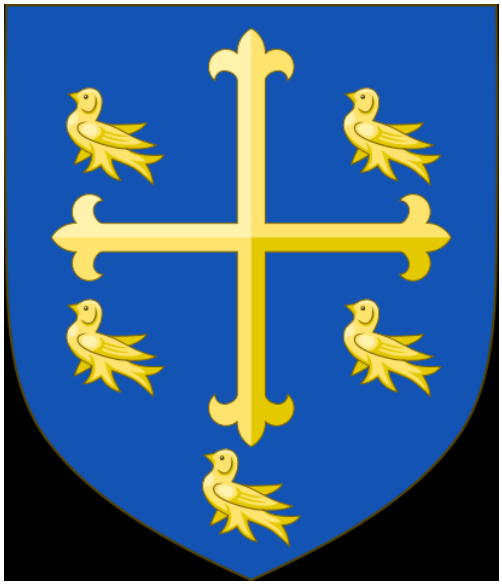

Figure 7 Edward the Confessor (1042 to 1066)

Edward the Confessor was one of the last Anglo-Saxon kings of England and is usually regarded as the last king of the House of Wessex, ruling from 1042 to 1066. When Edward died in 1066 he was succeeded by Harold Godwinson, who was defeated and killed in the same year at the Battle of Hastings by the Normans under William the Conqueror. Edward was canonized in 1161 by Pope Alexander III, and is commemorated on 13 October by the Roman Catholic Church of England and Wales, and the Church of England. He was regarded as one of the national saints of England until King Edward III adopted Saint George as patron saint in about 1350.

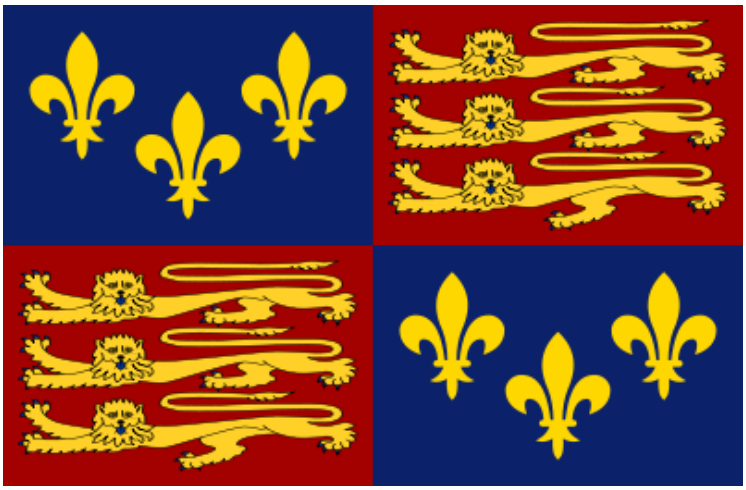

Figure 8 Henry IV (1399–1413)

Henry IV was King of England and Lord of Ireland. He was the ninth King of England of the House of Plantagenet, and also asserted his grandfather's claim to the title King of France. The lilies of France were originally in the form of France Ancienne, in other words, they were strewn across the field of the flag, and overlapped the edges of the field. In 1365 the lilies were reduced to three, arranged two over one, the one being rather larger than the upper two. This arrangement was known as France Moderne. In 1405, King Henry IV changed the lilies on the English standard to the three pattern, stating that he claimed “France not as she was in the past, but as she is today”.

This version of the Royal Standard was to last for 198 years until James I came to the throne, despite dynastic changes and the War of the Roses which fell within this time. This is a very good example in royal heraldry of the “tyranny of inertia”. Once a blazon was added to a royal coat of arms, it was almost impossible for it to be removed. Hence, the English (and later British) Royal Arms were to include the arms of royal France for 460 years, during which time, England was more often at war with France than not.

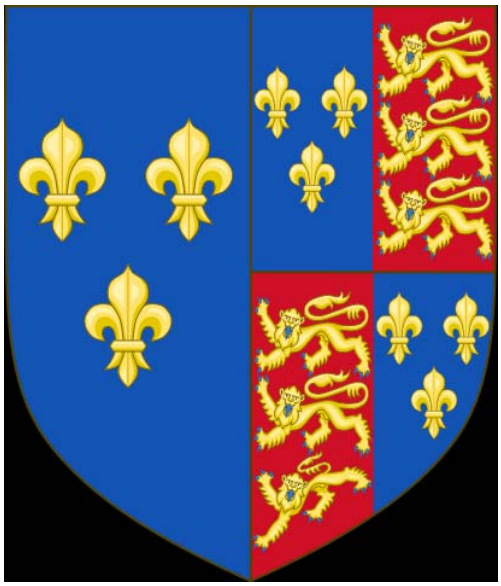

Figure 9 Henry VI (1422–1471)

Henry VI was King of England from 1422 to 1461 and again from 1470 to 1471, and disputed King of France from 1422 to 1453. The last king of the Lancastrian dynasty, Henry VI was born at Windsor Castle on 6th December, 1421 and became King of England in his cradle; he was barely nine months old when his famous father, Henry V, died of dysentery on campaign in France. Two months later he also became King of France, when his grandfather, the mentally unstable Charles VI, died.

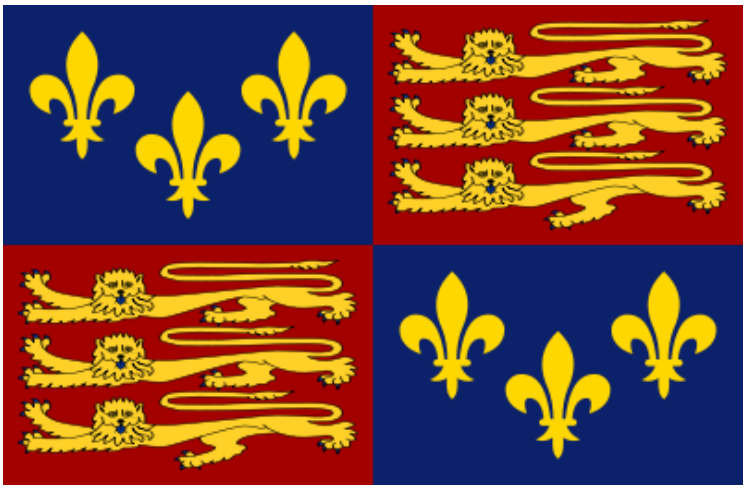

Figure 10 Edward IV (1461–1483)

Edward IV was King of England from 4 March 1461 until 3 October 1470, and again from 11 April 1471 until his death in 1483. He was the first Yorkist King of England. An extremely capable and daring military commander, Edward destroyed the House of Lancaster in a series of spectacular military victories; he was never defeated on the field of battle. He restored the arms of King Henry IV.

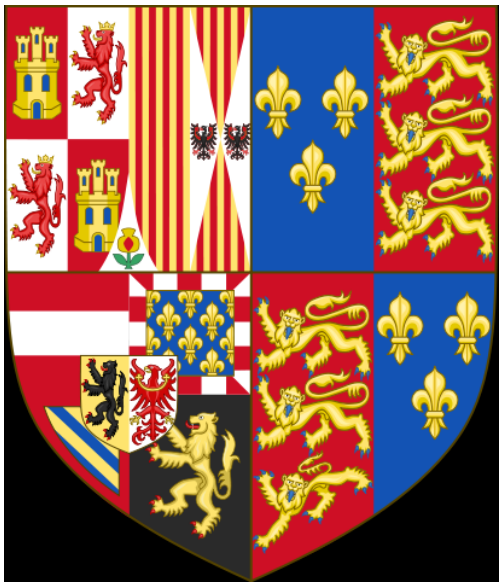

Figure 11 Mary I (1554–1558)

Mary I was Queen regnant of England and Ireland from July 1553 until her death in 1558. A queen regnant (plural "queens regnant") is a female monarch who reigns in her own right, in contrast to a "queen consort", who is the wife of a reigning king. A "queen dowager" is the widow of a king who reigned in his own right, and a "queen mother" is a queen dowager who is also the mother of a reigning sovereign. She was the eldest daughter of Henry VIII and the only surviving child of Catherine of Aragon.

Mary impaled her arms with those of her husband, King Philip. Although Queen Mary's father, King Henry VIII, assumed the title "King of Ireland" and this was further conferred upon King Philip, the arms were not altered to feature the Kingdom of Ireland.

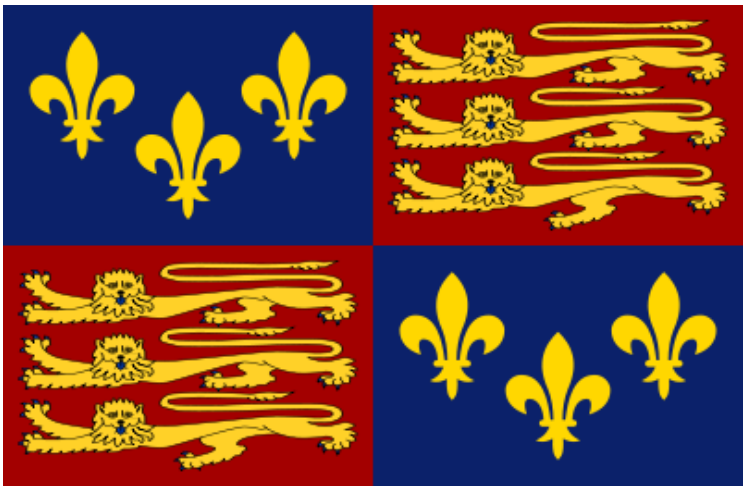

Figure 12 Elizabeth I (1558–1603)

Elizabeth I restored the arms of Henry IV when she ascended the throne in 1558. These arms were consequently in use from 1405 to 1603, some 198 years.

Figure 13 James VI and I (1603–1625)

When Queen Elizabeth I died in 1603 the crown passed to King James VI of Scotland who became James I of England. He inherited the English and Irish crown James I united the Crown of the Kingdom of Scotland with the crown of the Kingdoms of England and Ireland (each country remained legally separate, with their own Parliaments, judiciary, and laws, though each was ruled by James). At this time, the entire English royal arms of lions and lilies was seen as a unit, and it was quartered with those of Scotland (Or a lion rampant within a double tressure flory counterflory gules) and Ireland (Azure a harp or stringed argent), so the English lions appeared four times, as did the French lilies.

We shall now look at the arms of Scotland and Ireland.

Figure 14 Royal Arms of Scotland

The James I arms included the Scottish Royal Arms. William the Lion (1143–1214) is generally credited with adopting this symbol, although records of this are uncertain. The arms comprised Or a lion rampant within a double tressure flory counterflory gules.

Figure 15 Arms of Ireland

The James I arms also included the arms of Ireland. The traditional arms of Ireland have the harp on a blue field. A gold harp on a green field was the traditional Green Flag of Ireland before the tricolour became popular. The evolution of the heraldic harp can be traced in Irish coinage. The harp first appeared on coins in the reign of Henry VIII. From the reign of Henry VIII to that of Elizabeth I the fore-pillar of the harp was plain. In the coinages of James I and Charles I it had an animal head. The naked female torso first appeared in the coinage of Charles II and was a permanent feature from then until 1822 when the Irish currency was abolished. The harp adopted as the state emblem on the formation of the Irish Free State is a medieval instrument known as the Brian Boru harp. It is preserved in Trinity

College Dublin. Its use is reserved to the state so all private bodies are obliged to use harps of other designs.

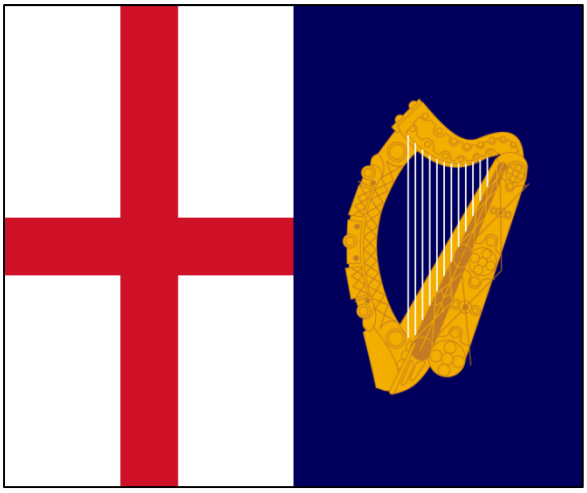

Figure 16 Flag of the Commonwealth of England (1649–1651)

After the creation of the Commonwealth of England by Cromwell, England adopted a St George's Cross with a plain harp cross as the state flag. The latter style no doubt resulted from the puritan ideals of the church at the time.

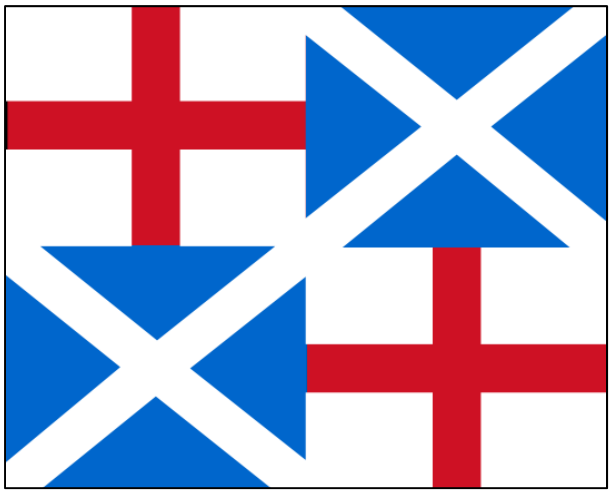

Figure 17 Flag of the Commonwealth of England (1651–1658)

The flag was later changed to the St George's and St Andrews Cross quartered.

Figure 18 Charles II (1660–1685)

After the English Civil War and restoration of the monarch in 1660, Charles II ascended the throne and restored the Royal Arms to those used by James I.

Figure 19 William III and Mary II (1689–1702)

In 1689, William III of Orange and his wife Mary were invited to assume the throne thus starting the Hanoverian dynasty. The arms of James I re-appeared in the arms complete with lilies. William and Mary's identical arms were impaled but with an escutcheon of Nassau added for William III (Azure billetty and a lion rampant or). When Mary died, William reigned alone and used his arms only.

Figure 20 Anne (1702–1714)

When Queen Anne inherited the throne upon the death of King William III in 1702, the Royal Arms returned to the 1603 version.

Figure 21 Anne (1702–1714)

In 1707, with the Act of Union between England and Scotland the new arms, those of Scotland and England were "impaled" into a single escutcheon in the first and fourth quarters. This was shown by the inclusion of the whole of the Scottish lion, but only half of the tressure. The French lilies were placed in the second quarter. It has been written, even in quite creditable books, that this indicated that the English claim to the French throne was weakening. However, this is not correct since it is merely a simple recognition that France was not united to England and Scotland as they were to each other.

Figure 22 George I (1714–1727)

Following the death of Queen Anne in 1714, the Elector of Hanover became George I when he inherited the throne under the provisions of the Act of Settlement 1701. The fourth quarters was changed to three sections tierced per pale and per chevron for Hanover, Gules two lions passant or, Or semy of hearts gules a lion rampant azure, Gules a horse courant argent. Overall an escutcheon of presence was added gules charged with the Crown of Charlemagne.

Figure 23 George III (1760–1820) as the Elector of Hanover

The Acts of Union 1800 united the Kingdoms of Great Britain and Ireland. At the same time, King George III abandoned his ancestors' ancient claim to the French throne was finally abandoned in 1801, at the Treaty of Amiens, which ended the war between Britain and Revolutionary France. As First Consul, Napoleon Bonaparte pointed out that there was no longer a “French Throne” to be claimed. At the same time, the Hanoverian arms were moved from the fourth quarter to an escutcheon, topped with an

Elector's Cap. This was because the King of England was also Elector of Hanover, meaning that he was one of those who chose the Holy Roman Emperor (although the Holy Roman Empire had been effectively ended by Napoleon in the same year).

Figure 24 George III (1760–1820) when Hanover raised to a Kingdom

With the end of the Napoleonic War and the re-organisation of Europe, Hanover was raised to the status of a kingdom. In 1816 the British Royal Standard underwent another small change, in that the Elector's Cap was replaced by a royal crown. This lasted for only 21 years.

Figure 25 Victoria (1837–1901)

With the death of King William IV, the British crown passed to Queen Victoria. Hanover was ruled under the Salic Law, which forbade a woman to hold the throne. Victoria's uncle, the Duke of Cambridge, was sent to Hanover as the new king and the Hanoverian arms were removed from those of the United Kingdom, to form the pattern which we still see today. The banner again shows in the first and fourth quarters England, in the second quarter Scotland, and in the third quarter Ireland. However, a different standard is flown when the sovereign visits Scotland.

Figure 26 Victoria (1837–1901) in Scotland

This shows the Royal Standard used in Scotland with the arms of Scotland in the first and fourth quarter, the arms of England in the second quarter, and the arms of Ireland in the third quarter.

Figure 27 Prince Albert 1819–1861

The coat of arms of Prince Albert, Duke of Saxony, husband and Consul to Queen Victoria comprises: the Royal Arms in the first and fourth quarter with a label of three points Argent charged on the centre with cross Gules and in the second and third quarter, Saxony (Barry of ten Or and sable, a crown of rue in bend Vert).

Figure 28 Edward Prince of Wales later Edward VII

The standard of a child of the British Sovereign bears a white 'label' with three points and a grandchild's label has five points. Members of the Royal family are distinguished by special emblems on their labels. As the son of Queen Victoria, Edward Prince of Wales who later became Edward VII had a white label with three points, and an escutcheon of Saxony from his father Prince Albert.

Figure 29 Edward Prince of Wales later Edward VIII

However, in 1917 during the First World War the escutcheon of Saxony was replaced with an escutcheon of the Arms of Wales with Ducal Coronet and was first used by Edward Prince of Wales, who became Edward VIII.

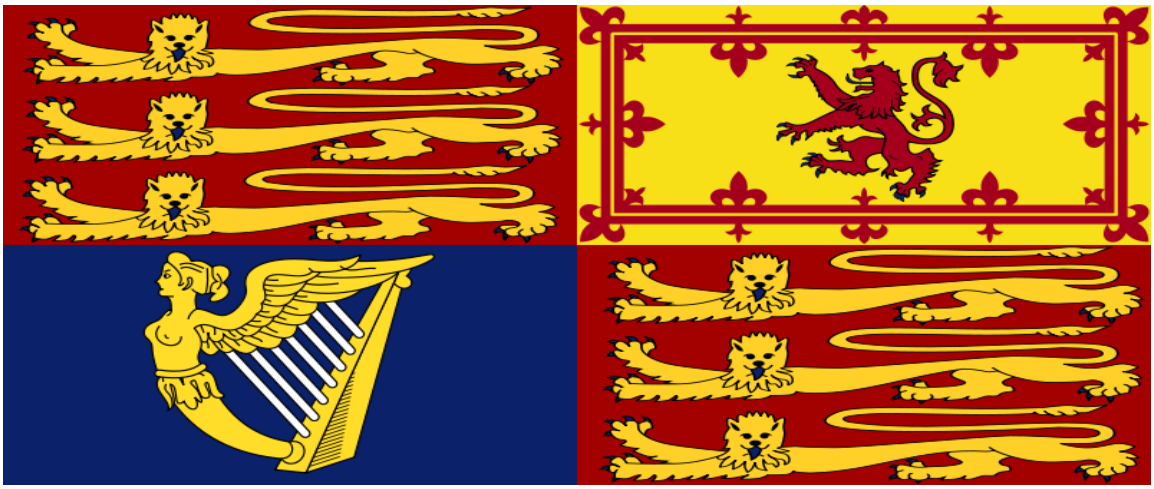

Figure 30 Elizabeth II (1952–Present)

This is the Royal Standard of the current sovereign Elizabeth II which is used in England, Northern Ireland, Wales, and overseas. The harp of the Kingdom of Ireland remains despite partition in 1921, to represent Northern Ireland, although it is seen today on the Royal Coat of Arms as a plain Gaelic harp, rather than a winged female in accordance with the personal preference of Queen Elizabeth. The Queen uses the Royal Standard for Scotland when in Scotland as shown earlier. As stated earlier both standards were used by Victoria and have been in continuous use since 1837.

Figure 31 Charles Prince of Wales

This shows the Prince of Wales Royal Standard used in England, Northern Ireland, Wales, and overseas which was first used in 1917 by Edward, later Edward VIII.

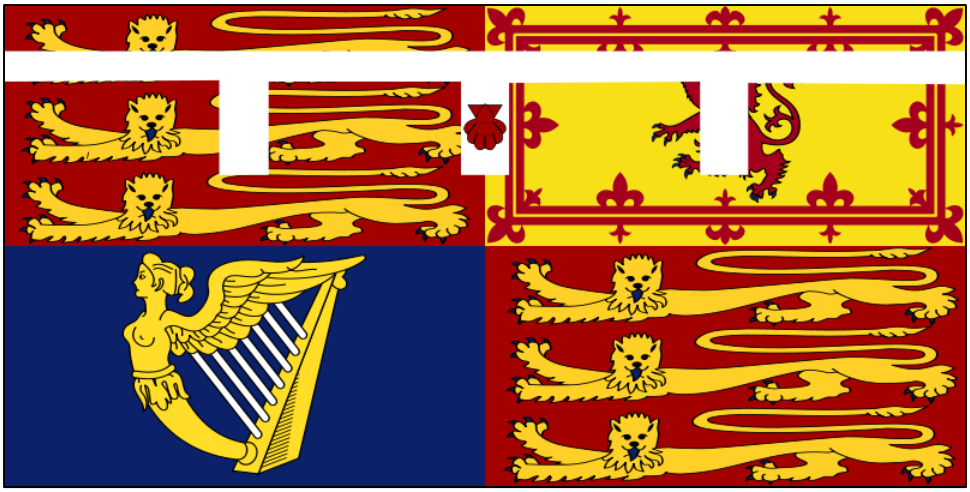

Figure 32 Duke of Cambridge Prince William of Wales

On reaching his majority, Prince William the son of the Prince of Wales and grandson to Queen Elizabeth II was granted arms. Since Prince William is the second in line to the throne (and can only go up the list) he has a three-pointed white label rather than the more usual five-pointed label for a grandchild of the monarch. To differentiate it from his father's arms he has chosen the escallop or shell from his mother's arms. This is shown in crimson on the central white point of the label.

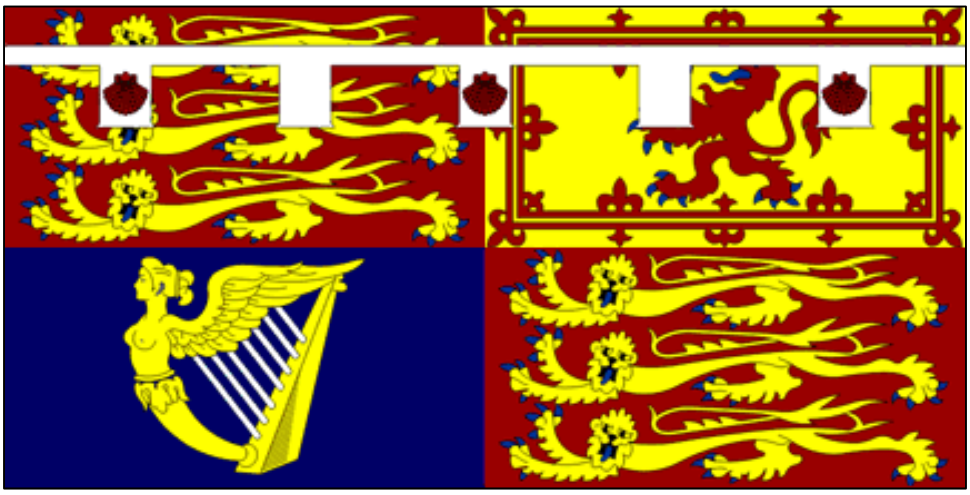

Figure 33 Prince Henry of Wales

The second son of the Prince of Wales, Prince Henry of Wales (usually known as Prince Harry) uses a five-pointed label, the same as all grandchildren of the monarch, except his elder brother. His Coat of Arms is charged with red escallops on the first, third, and fifth points. When Prince Harry becomes the son or brother of the monarch, his label will be reduced to three points. In that event, the two blank points will disappear, leaving three points charged with a red escallop.

Figure 34 Other Royal Family Members

Other members of the royal family without their own specific standards use the royal standard with a bordure of ermine. Diana as Princess of Wales was entitled to use the Other Members' standard when she was married to Charles and as a courtesy afterwards. It was this standard which was used during her funeral service.

Acknowledgments

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Wilkepedia – numerous articles and authors on this site

About the Authors

Geoff Parsons is the Chairman of the Flag Institute, based in the United Kingdom. He cultivated an interest in flags during his service as a Royal Naval Officer. Since retirement he has been responsible for the strategic development of Portsmouth Naval Base. His office window faces HMS Victory and the historic dockyard so he regularly enjoys the view of flag displays during special events and on Royal birthdays.

Michael Faul has been editor of *Flagmaster*, the journal of the Flag Institute, since 1997. He was born 25 November 1941 in Hartlepool, England, and emigrated to Rhodesia with his family in 1949. He attended Rhodes University, Grahamstown, South Africa and Teacher's College, Bulawayo, Rhodesia. He taught in Bulawayo, Rhodesia 1965–1968, and married Ethel Bowers 4 January 1969 in London. They have five children: Michelle, Carole, Danette, Judith, and Moira. He returned to Rhodesia in 1973 as a teacher in secondary schools, and was Head of History at Roosevelt High School 1982–1984. He returned to Britain in 1985 and settled in York. Interested in flags since childhood, he still has his first flag book (1958). He joined the Flag Institute in 1988, becoming its Secretary, (later Membership Secretary) in 1990. He attended ICVs in 1991, 1993, 1995, 1997, and 1999. He was the principal organiser of XIX ICV in York, 2001.