

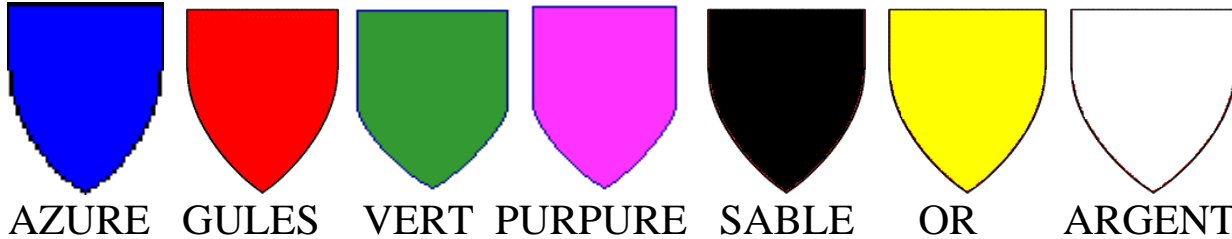
## Author's Preface

The paper, "Introduction to Blazon", was written as the class handout for a short class, taught at the Dragon's Lair Candlemas feast, 17 Feb. 2007. The title completely describes the purpose of the class and its handout. This paper was in no way intended to be an encyclopedic presentation of Blazon, of all possible charges, their positions, and unique names if any. To have done that would have been to engage in a lengthy paraphrasing and quoting-from of such standard texts on the subject of Heraldry as those listed at the end of this paper, a wasteful and pretentious undertaking at best. Please do not look upon this as a substitute for regular study and use of those and other scholarly texts on the subject. If the class, and this accompanying handout, gives any students or subsequent readers a "feel" for the how-to of Blazon, then its humble purpose has been achieved.

Ian MacKynnes  
AoA, Wyvern, GdS, WOAW, Snapdragon.

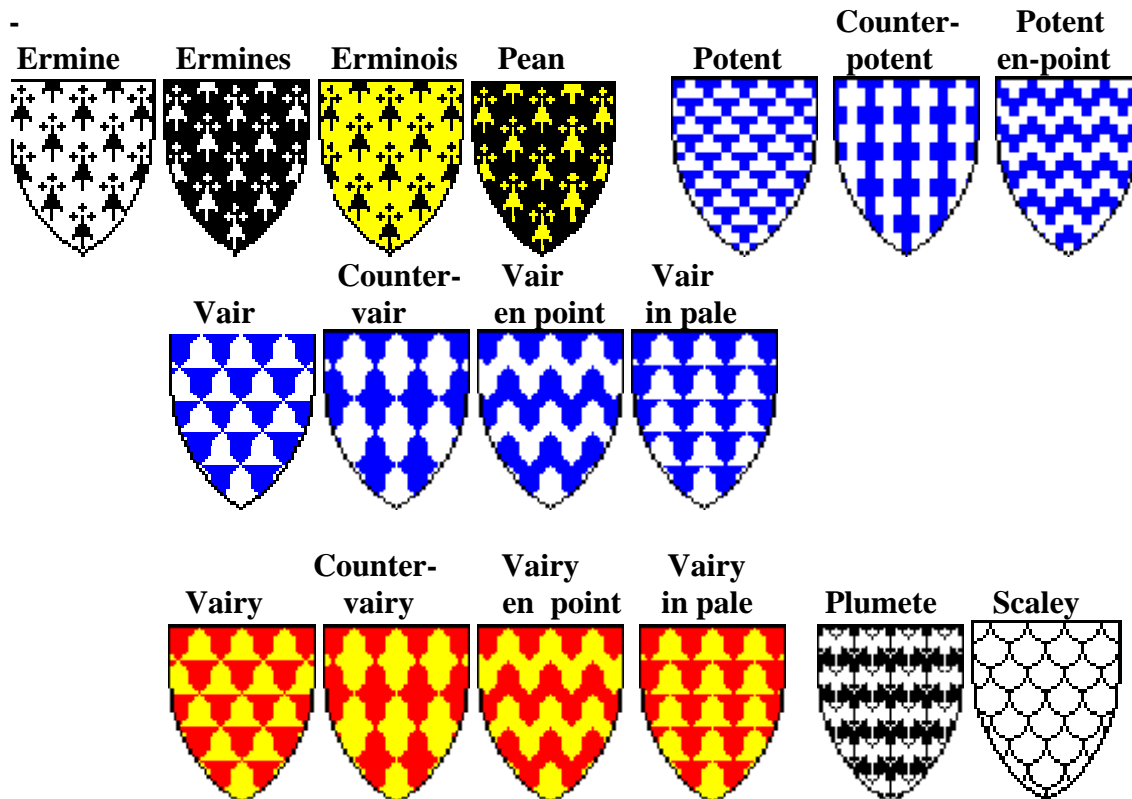
## An introduction to Blazon

Everything used in the making of arms has a name, one that is not quite English, not truly French, nor wholly Latin; welcome to the Language of Blazon. What we will do in this course is to begin your familiarization with the names of the colors, lines, positions, and shapes used in the language of Blazon. The first things we will work with are the colors and metals used in Heraldry, referred to as "**Tinctures**".

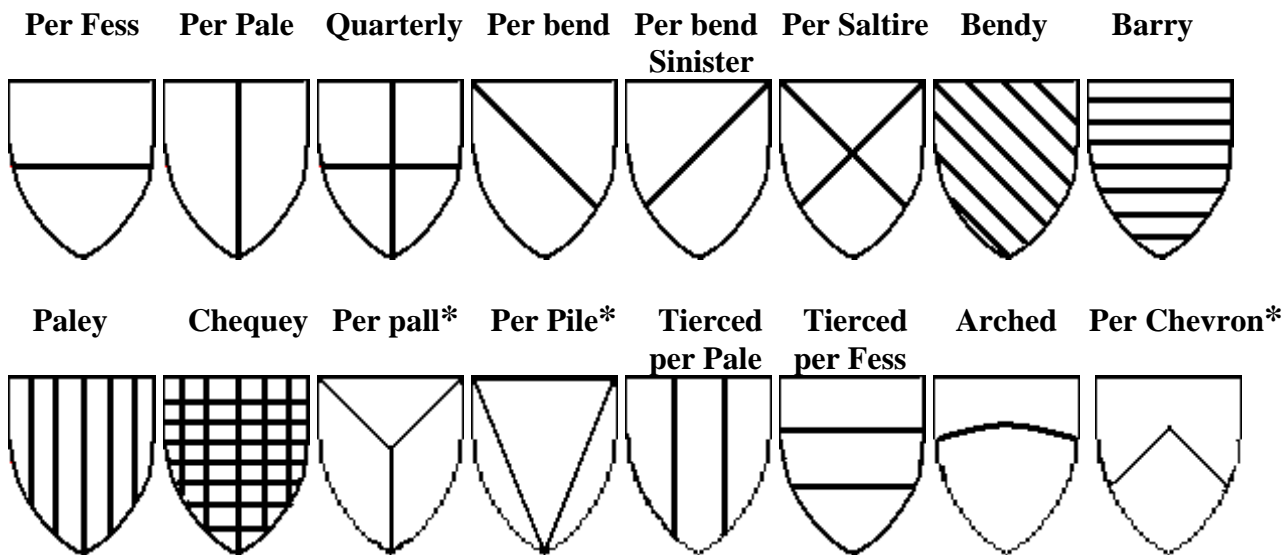


Within the limits of SCA heraldry, these are the colors and metals that you have to work with. Any other colors that may exist in nature may ONLY be displayed in heraldry by describing the object as "proper", meaning as found in nature.

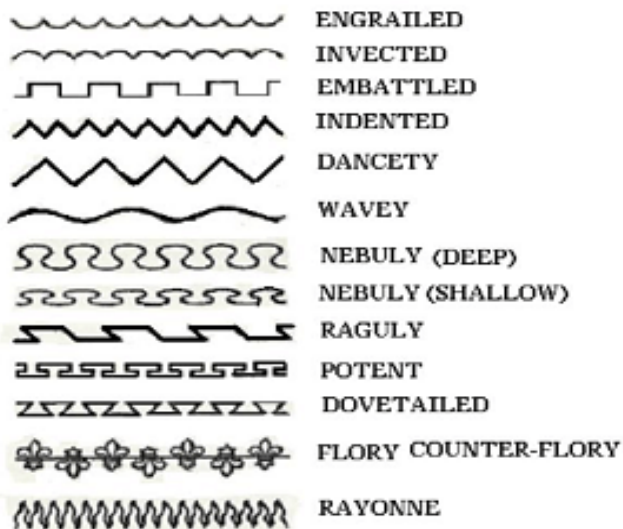
The next sets of items are the "**furs**". The heraldic renderings are stylizations of the pattern of the shading of the furs of various animals, and in most cases have NO RESEMBLANCE to anything found in nature on the hide of an animal.



After the furs, we will discuss **field division**. While the furs may have *looked* like rather complex field-divisions, they aren't, but are merely ways to cover all or part thereof. The common field divisions are shown below. Note that the –sinister or –inverted variant of some of these are not shown, but they do exist. Those with an -inverted variant are noted with an \*

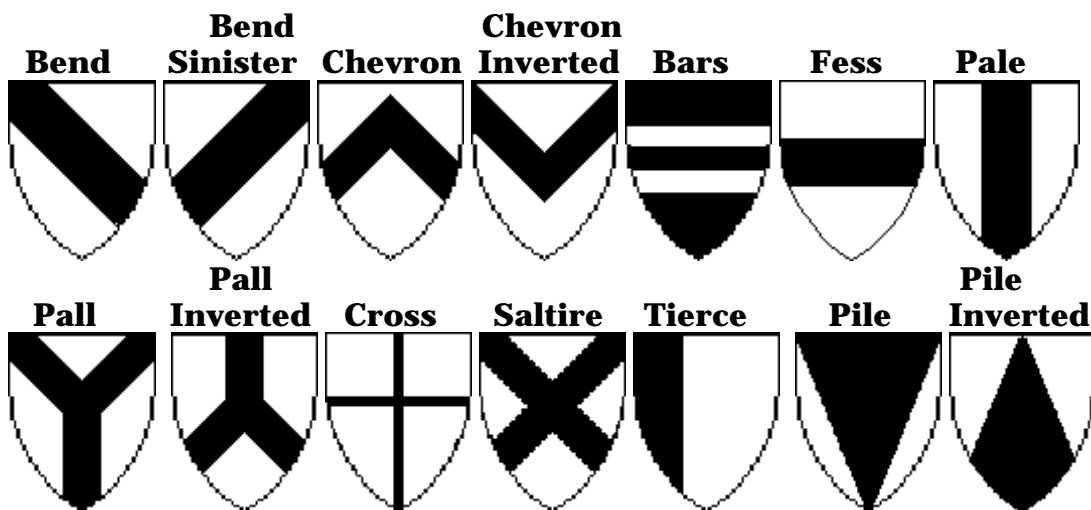


Fields can also be divided by lines that are not straight. The most common of these lines are listed below: This is NOT an exhaustive list.

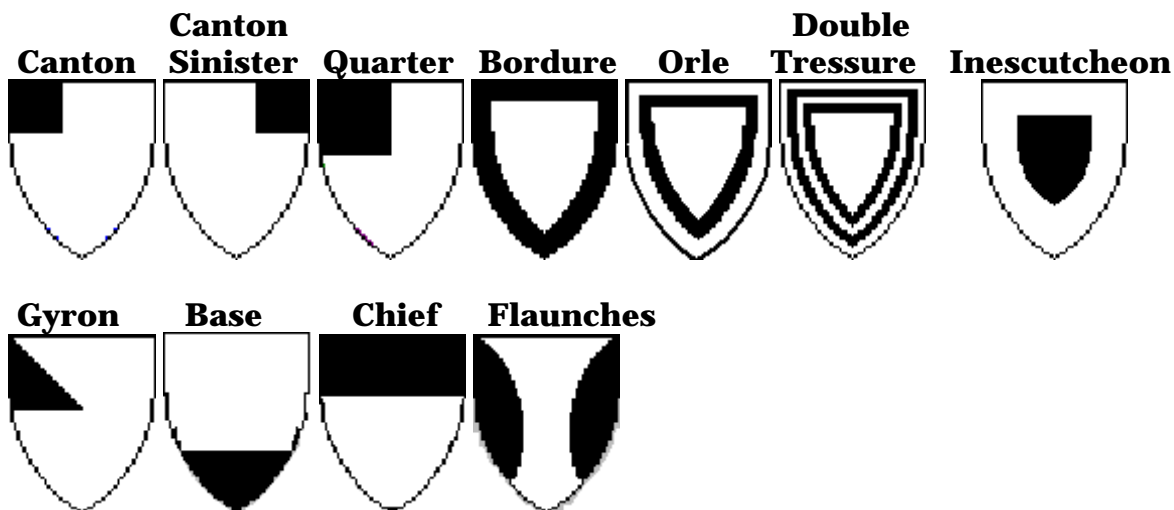


When a field is divided by a complex line, you name the division first, then the line used, for example; “Per fess indented”, or “Per bend Dovetailed”.

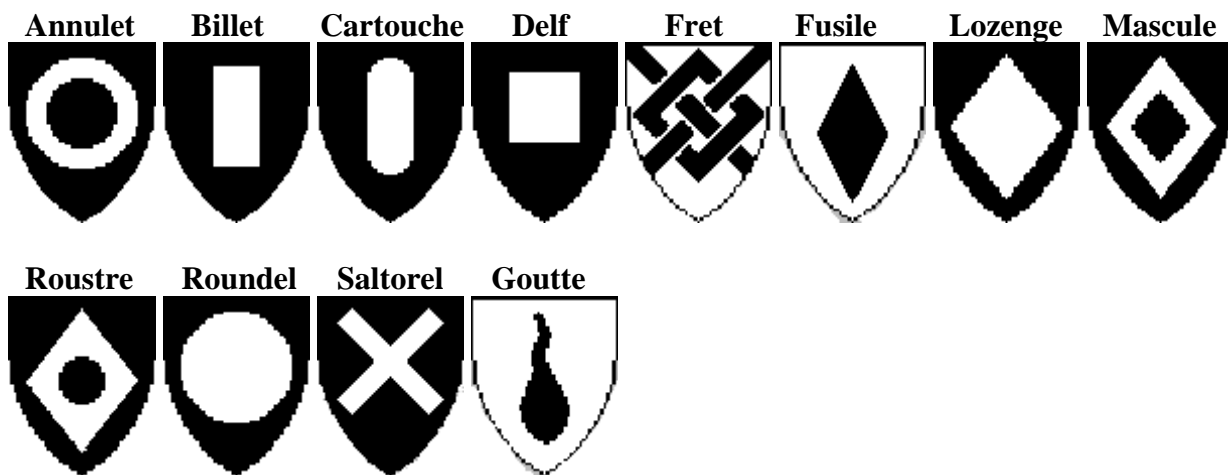
The next items we will look at are the **Ordinaries**. They are major portions of the field differentiated by tincture. Many of their names resemble those of the lines of division, for example, the Fess, the Pale, the Bend, etc. They can also be demarked with complex lines, which would give you such things as “A fess Rayonne”, “A bend engrailed”, and so on. This is a partial listing of the Ordinaries. This is NOT an exhaustive list.



There are other such shapes, referred-to as SUB-ordinaries. Examples of these are shown below. This is NOT an exhaustive list.



Now that we've dealt with the field, it's tincturing, dividing, and sectioning, we come to what to put ON it, the items called **Charges**. We will first show some inanimate, geometric charges. This is NOT an exhaustive list.



Any object can be depicted as a charge, so attempting to list them all and depict them would entail producing a full-scale book. There ARE, however, some conventions. If an object may be shown in multiple positions, one of those will be the *DEFAULT* position, the other will be either “Inverted” or “Reversed”, or the orientation precisely stated. Consult a text on Heraldry for the complete listing of rules for inanimate charges. Since weapons, Primarily Swords, Axes, and Arrows, comprise a large percentage of inanimate charges, we will give them an explanation.



The sword's default position is *palewise* (vertical), with the hilt to *base*. A sword that is blazoned as *inverted* would have the hilt on top and the point to *base*. A sword described as being *fesswise* (horizontal), will have the hilt to *sinister* (right) and the point to *dexter* (left). A sword that is blazoned as *reversed* would therefore have the hilt to *dexter* and the point to *sinister*. A sword *proper* is shown with an *argent* blade and *Or* quillions and hilt.

The axe's default posture is *palewise* (vertical), with the head to *chief* (top) and the blade (if single-bladed) to *dexter* (left). When blazoned as *proper* the haft is brown (wood).

The arrow is, by default *palewise* (vertical), with the point to *base* (bottom). An arrow that is described as *inverted* would have the point to *chief* (top). When an arrow is *fesswise* (horizontal), the point is to *sinister* (right) (this is opposite of swords).

The heraldic bestiary is also rich with possibilities. Since there are some standard positions that the quadrupeds use, we will list the most common of them. Note that all the lions are shown facing DEXTER, that is the default facing for a single animal of any type.



**Rampant:** Erect, one hind paw on the ground, the other three paws raised, the head looking forward and having the tail erect.

**Salient:** In the act of springing, both hind paws on the ground, both forepaws raised, tail erect.

**Passant:** Walking, three paws on the ground, the dexter forepaw raised, head looking forward and the tail curved over the back.

**Statant:** Standing, all four paws on the ground, the tail *may* drop behind.

**Sejant:** Seated with the forepaws on the ground, looking forward, tail passed between the hind legs and it's end erect.

**Passant:** Walking, three legs on the ground, Sinister paw raised, head forward, tail curved over the back.

**Sejant Rampant:** As per Sejant, but with the forepaws raised.

**Couchant:** Crouching, with legs and belly on the ground, looking forward, tail passed between the hind legs and it's tip erect.

**Dormant:** As per Couchant, but with head lowered and tail on the ground.

The head position is also important in blazoning a beast, these positions are as follows:  
**Guardant:** Having the head turned to face the viewer.  
**Reguardant:** The head turned to look over the shoulder.

The tail, if there is one, has, appropriately and poetically, the last say in this chain of descriptives. These positions are:

**Extended:** Straight out behind.

**Coward:** Tail between the legs.

**Knoved:** In a knot.

A beast may be doubly-tailed or Queue-fourche (Fork-tailed).

Multiples of the same beast have specific terms. Two rampant facing each other are: *rampant-combatant*. Back-to-back is: *Rampant addorsed*.



Even though these positions have been illustrated with Lions, they are generally applicable to all quadrupeds, including, as this the instructor has seen, Rampant-combatant Gerbils. Certain beasts have positions unique to themselves, such as the Gryphon's "Segreant". (Equivalent to Rampant, Gryphons are kinky that way) Consult your choice of heraldic text for further position information on heraldic beasts.

Now that we have charges on the field, we need to talk **Arrangement**. In the event of multiples of a single charge, how they are placed needs to be carefully described. Generally the pattern of arrangement is the same as the lines of division and ordinaries. For instance, if you had three Mulletts, (stars) they could be arranged "In Pale", vertically down the middle of the field, "In Fess", across the middle of the field, "In bend", diagonally across the field, and so forth. A scattering of a charge uniformly over the field is called a "Semme", as in "A semme of mullets.....".

The last items we will discuss are infrequently used in S.C.A. heraldry, though with 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> generations coming along, they are beginning to be seen more often. These are the **Marks of Cadency**. These were marks used to denote birth-order when the many sons bore the Paternal Arms *differenced*. While that was the *original* intent, the instructor feels that, in the S.C.A., there is no bar to make against daughters bearing them, nor against their use on *maternal* arms. These marks are listed below:



These marks are for the 1<sup>st</sup> through 9th-born, which should more-than-accommodate any current family. They are, in order, the LABEL, the CRESCENT, the MULLET, the MARTLET, the ORLE, the FLEUR-DE-LIS, the ROSE, the CROSS MOLINE, and the DOUBLE QUARTREFOIL. The marks of cadency were usually placed either **on** a chief, or **in** chief across other charges. They were removed from the eldest son's arms upon the death of the father who's arms the son bore, the son then bearing the un-differenced paternal arms.

## Pattern of Blazoning

To blazon arms, the order of description is as follows:

- 1.** The field. State the tincture, metal, or fur if it is undivided. If divided, state the type of division, (Per pale, per fess, Quarterly, etc.) type of line involved if complex, and then the tinctures involved starting at the upper left as viewed.
- 2.** The principal charge or charges. State the number, position, arrangement, and tincture, in that order.
- 3.** Secondary charges, as per the primary charges, if any.
- 4.** Charges upon other charges, if any.
- 5.** Ordinaries, such as chief, canton, bordure, etc.
- 6.** Objects placed on the ordinaries.
- 7.** Marks of Cadency if any.

Work from upper-left as viewed to lower right, and upward in layers starting with the field.

As examples, the blazon of these arms will be used:

Khulan Shizir

“Or, a semme of Thistles proper”



A simple, one-tincture field with a scattering of like charges.

Eadric of An Tir

Per bend sinister azure and sable a badgers head erased



Single, plain line of division, two-tinctures, single charge centered.

Ian MacKynnes

Per fess checky azure and argent, and azure, in chief two tridents in saltire or, in base a dolphin naiant argent.



Divided field, one part itself divided, simple lines of division, with a different charge in both parts of the field.

Gwenellyen Potter Or, a dragon's head cabossed and on a point pointed rayonny gules an amphora Or, a bordure sable



Single-tincture field with a charge and a charged complex-line ordinary and a simple-line bordure.

Phillip of Longfellow Azure, on a bend between a dexter armored fist and a lymphad argent three mullets palewise azure, a bordure potency argent.



Single-tincture field with two different charges separated by a charged simple-line ordinary, with a complex-line bordure.

**Strider of Duramen** Argent, a bend sinister argent, fimbriated, overall a winged unicorn salient sable, armed, unguled, and collared of a label trailing a broken chain Or, on a chief sable a label throughout argent.



Single-tincture field centrally-charged, said charge itself charged, with two simple-line ordinaries, one charged with a cadency-mark.

As you can see, the blazon works to describe things in layers, starting with the field and working upward. The ordering of the language is crucial in insuring that someone attempting to render the Emblazon (The painting) from the given blazon paints it the same way it was originally painted.

As a test, attempt to blazon this set of arms:



Anne Of Caerdydd

Sources consulted:

**A Complete Guide to Heraldry,**

A.C. Fox-Davies

**Boutell's Heraldry,**

Charles Boutell, Revised by C.W. Scott-Giles. 1958, Fredric Warne and Co. Ltd., London and New York

<http://www.Tempus Peregrinator's Little Heraldry Book.htm>

<http://www.SCA - West Kingdom College of Heraldry.htm>