

Coat of Arms



City of Dundee

COAT OF ARMS CITY OF DUNDEE

There are very strict rules about coats of arms and about who can wear what. It all began on the battlefield when few of the foot soldiers could read or write, but needed to know who was where, whose side they were on and who they were against.



Maybe your leader was a Scrymgeour so you looked for a wavy blade to follow.



Maybe you were fighting off the Percy family from the North of England who'd come across the border to give you a hard time so you'd be shouting and chasing after folk with diamonds on their shields.



Today, you'd be silly to plant yourself right in the middle of the 'Dark Blues' (Dundee FC fans) if you were wearing the Tangerine and Black of the 'Arabs' (Dundee United supporters) but at least most football supporters in Scotland today don't have spears and swords and armour.



Nowadays coats of arms are used for flags and buildings and posh letter headings.

The grant of arms to the City is from the **Lord Lyon King of Arms**. This year the Lord Lyon King of Arms is Dr Joseph Morrow, who is himself from Dundee. If you are seriously interested in heraldry in Scotland he might be someone to contact. [The Court of the Lord Lyon](#) has a website where you can find out more.

The office of Lyon King of Arms dates from the 14th century. The position may incorporate the much older Celtic office of royal **Seanchaidh** or of King's Poet with responsibility for keeping the royal genealogy and attending the inauguration (later coronation) of the King.

The Lord Lyon is the sole King of Arms in Scotland. He is Head of the Heraldic Executive and the Judge of the Court of the Lord Lyon which has jurisdiction over all heraldic business in Scotland.

On ceremonial occasions the Lord Lyon is accompanied by Her Majesty's Officers of Arms, all of whom are members of the Royal Household. They are at present Rothesay Herald, Snawdoun Herald and Marchmont Herald, Ormond Pursuivant, Dingwall Pursuivant and Unicorn Pursuivant.

An Act of the Scottish Parliament of 1592 gave the Lord Lyon responsibility for prosecuting as a criminal offence anyone who uses unauthorised Arms.

In 1672 a further Act of the Scottish Parliament authorised the creation of the Public Register of All Arms and Bearings in Scotland. This Register is maintained by the Lyon Clerk and Keeper of the Records and contains an official copy of every Coat of Arms granted in Scotland since 1672.



Rev Dr Joseph Morrow
Lord Lyon King of Arms
and
Vice-Lord Lieutenant of Dundee

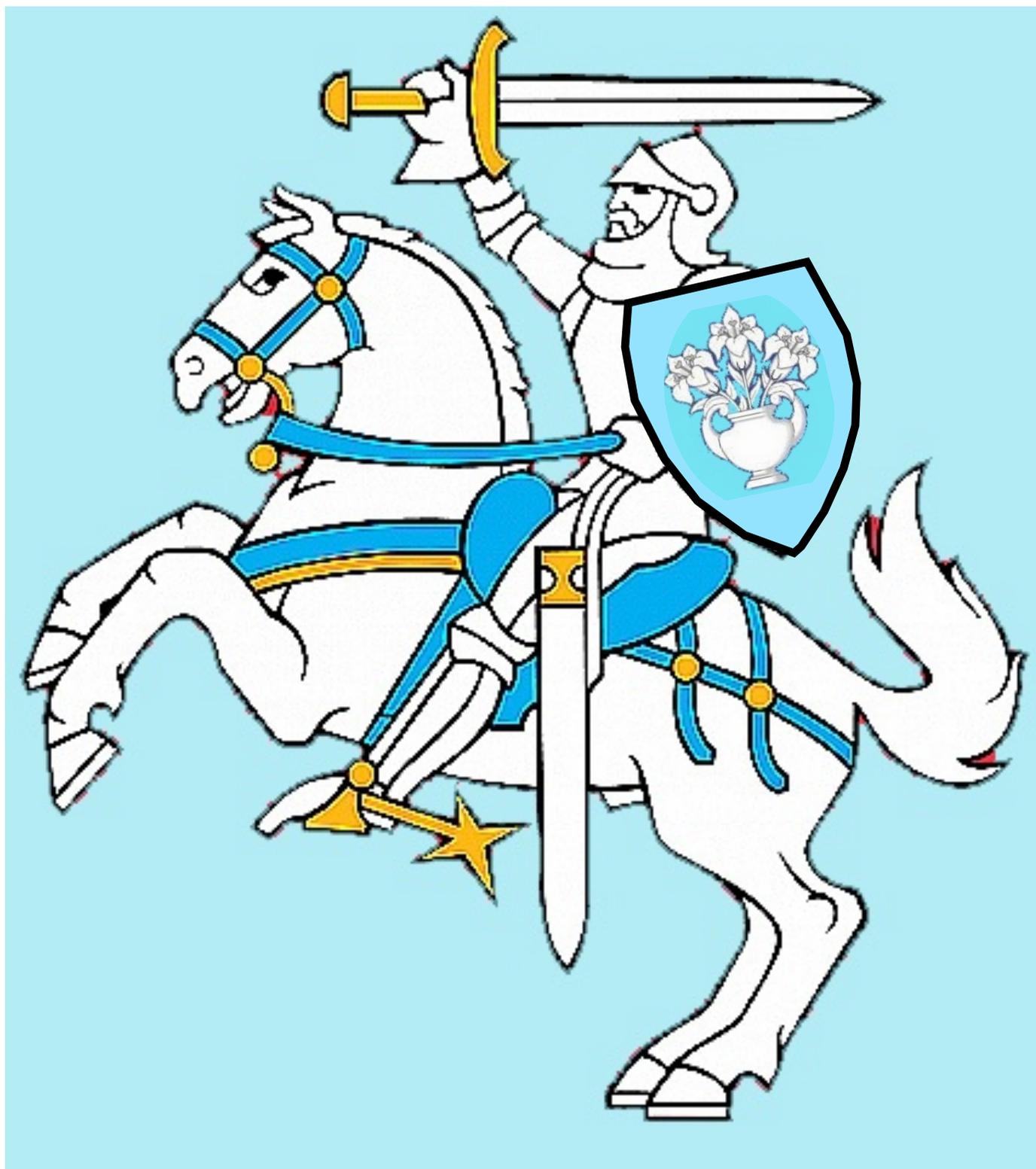


Her Majesty's Officers of Arms
2009

The written description of Dundee's coat of arms begins with sixteen lines of waffle about "These Presents". Alas, it doesn't mean presents as in birthday but just a letter that the Lord Lyon wrote in 1996 to say that the City had asked for a coat of arms and the Lord Lyon gave them one. So possibly "These Presents" could mean a present!

It ends VIDELICET, pronounced "WEE DAILY KETT" which is Latin, an old language which the Romans spoke, which just means NAMELY.

Then we get onto the nitty gritty. The most important part is the shield, which is what the Lord Provost would have been wearing on his arm on his horse.



Azure, a pot of three growing lilies argent

In heraldry special names are used for colours (called tinctures) so that if you didn't have a picture of the coat of arms in front of you then you could still draw one. Azure is blue, as in azure sky. So the background is blue. This is because The Virgin Mary/Saint Mary/The Madonna (NOT the singer!), the mother of baby Jesus who we remember each Christmas, is one of Dundee's two patron saints, and blue is her colour. Dundee's lilies aren't any old lilies you could buy in Tesco. They are special Madonna lilies, shaped like a trumpet, to remind us that Mary The Madonna is one of our patron saints.



Argent is heraldic for the colour white, and it comes from French for silver. The lilies are coloured silver or white, and that's another of the Virgin Mary's colours for purity and honesty.



Above the shield is placed a coronet appropriate to the statutory council of a city. Because Dundee's coat of arms isn't used for fighting any more it's made fancy by additions placed around the shield. It has a small crown above it called a coronet, and the design of the coronet has to be the same for all of Scotland's cities. (Can you name all six Scottish cities?)

VIDELICET a mural coronet Or masoned Sable

Do you remember what “wee daily kett” means?

“Or” is heraldry for the colour of gold. “Sable”, or fur, is heraldry for the colour of black. A mason is a builder who uses stone, so “masoned” means the edges of the gold stones making up the crown are picked out in black.



Dundee’s crown is like a mural or a brick wall to remind us that cities are made of buildings. Usually a mural means a wall that has been painted with pictures.

Watch the wall being painted at

<http://www.thecourier.co.uk/news/local/dundee/video-watch-as-dc-thomson-comic-heroes-take-over-our-kingsway-wall-1.428409>



On a Wreath of the Liveries is set for Crest a lily Argent

Thus on top of the whole shebang is a crest. A crest is what a knight would have worn on top of his helmet (like the plume shown on the right) and lots of people get muddled between a crest and a coat of arms. Imagine the Lord Provost with a huge lily on top of his helmet. Lily as in a Madonna lily with the trumpet, and argent as in white or silver.



In Escrol over the same this Motto "DEI DONUM"

In a banner at the very very top is a motto. Does your school have one?

In the army our own Black Watch have a Latin one “Nemo me impune lacessit” which means “Wha Daur Meddle Wi Me”.



Dundee's main motto is Latin for "Gift of God" and it's a pun. Do you know what this is? Can you give an example of a pun?

e.g. "Why did the spider go to the computer? To get to his web-site!"

Dundee's motto is a pun in Latin. Dei Donum (**Day – ee – doh – noom**) is Latin for "Gift of God". The Latin name for Dundee was Taodunum (you can see this written on the wall of St Andrew's Kirk next to the Wellgate) and in Latin (**Tay – ee –doh – noom**) that sounds much the same as Dei Donum.

In another Escrol under the Shield this Motto "PRUDENTIA ET CANDORE"

In another banner at the bottom another bit of the motto in Latin (Proo – den - sheeah – ett - kann - doh - ray) which means "with thought and purity". This also is to remind us of Saint Mary.

The said Shield having for Supporters two dragons, wings elevated, their tails nowed, together underneath Vert

The shield, which normally the Lord Provost would have worn on his arm, has to be held up, and in heraldry it is held up by supporters (as in football). Supporters can be animals or people. Dundee's shield is held up by two dragons.



Have you seen any dragons in Dundee? Have you climbed on the Murraygate dragon? We're not too sure where these dragons came from. They could come from an old story that there was a dragon in Dundee who killed all nine daughters of a poor farmer at Pitempton and that the boyfriend of one of the girls, called Martin, killed the dragon and that's where the place Strathmartine comes from.

Much more boringly it's more likely that the dragon represents the sea and ships and trade and therefore the dragons remind us of Dundee's other patron saint, Saint Clement, who usually has an anchor round his neck. "Wings elevated" means wings are up for the dragon ready to fly. Tails nowed means tails tied together in a knot, and vert is the colour name in heraldry for green.

So:-

Dundee's Coat of Arms is made up of a pot of white lilies on a blue background making us think of the city's first patron saint, Saint Mary. It is held up by two green dragons representing Dundee's other patron saint, Saint Clement. There is a banner above with a motto meaning "Gift of God" and another below which means that like Saint Mary, we should think only pure and good thoughts.



The Lord Lyon may be contacted via the website at www.lyon-court.com. He is keen to raise awareness of the role of the Court of the Lord Lyon and although his schedule is a very full one he would consider a request for a school visit if it could be accommodated in his diary.