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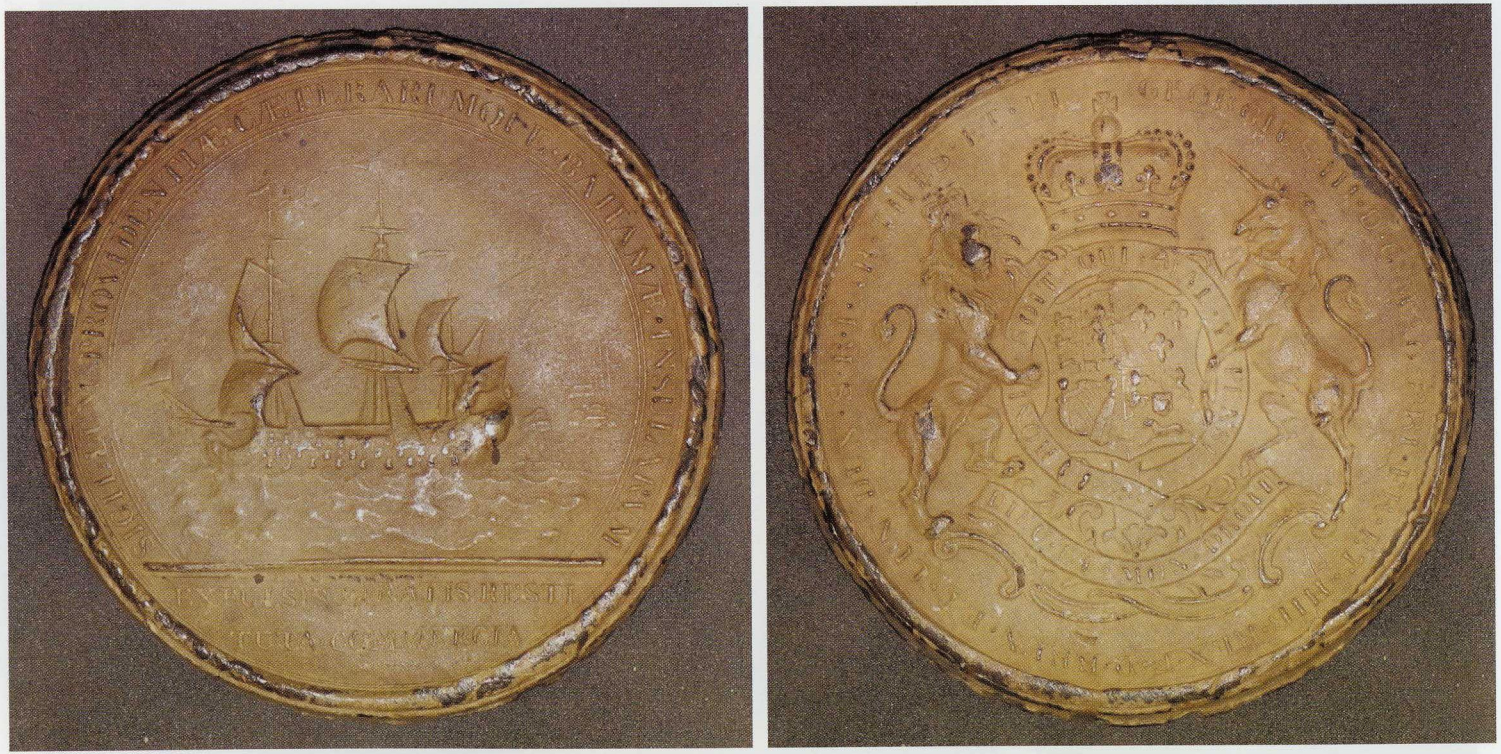
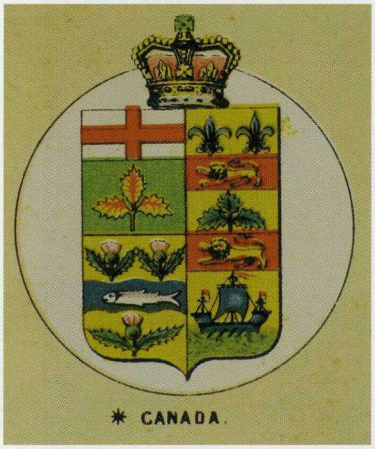
PLATE 3



George III's seal for the Bahamas (TNA CO 5/285). Obverse left, reverse right.
See page 14.

PLATE 4



Left (*a*), arms of Canada (*Quarterly 1 Ontario, 2 Quebec, 3 Nova Scotia, 4 New Brunswick*) from the Admiralty Flag Book, 1881 (TNA MT 9/183).
See page 15.

Below (*b*), flags for colonial governor-generals and ships of colonies, from the Admiralty Flag Book, 1881 (TNA MT 9/183).
See page 16.

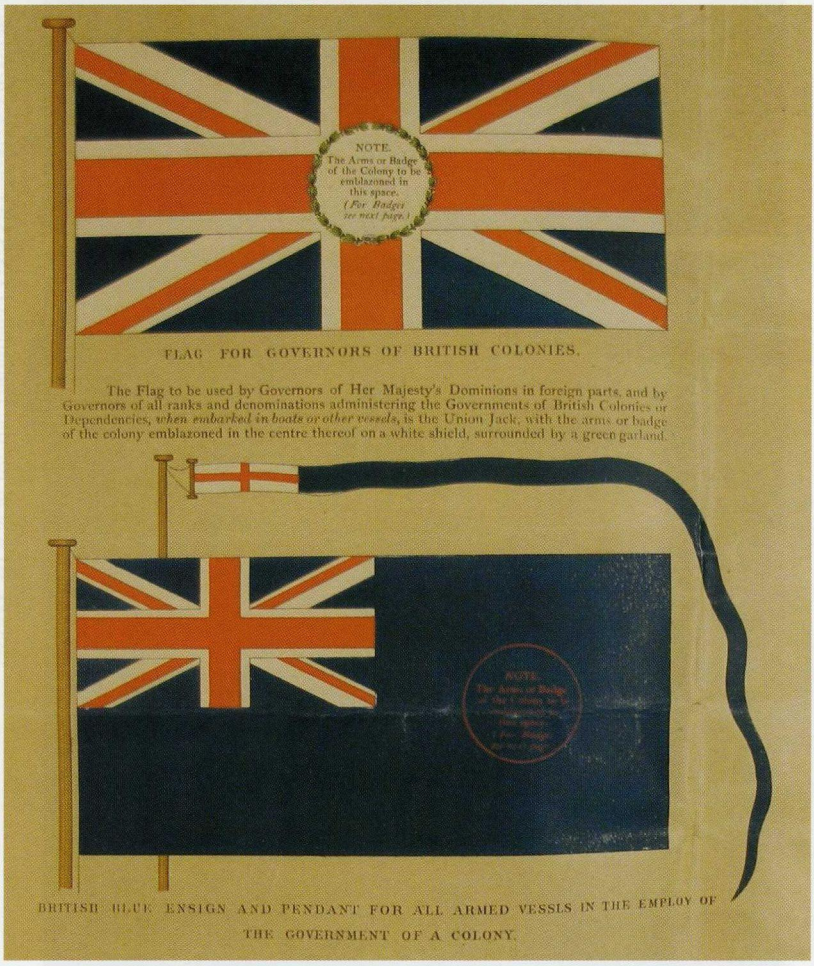
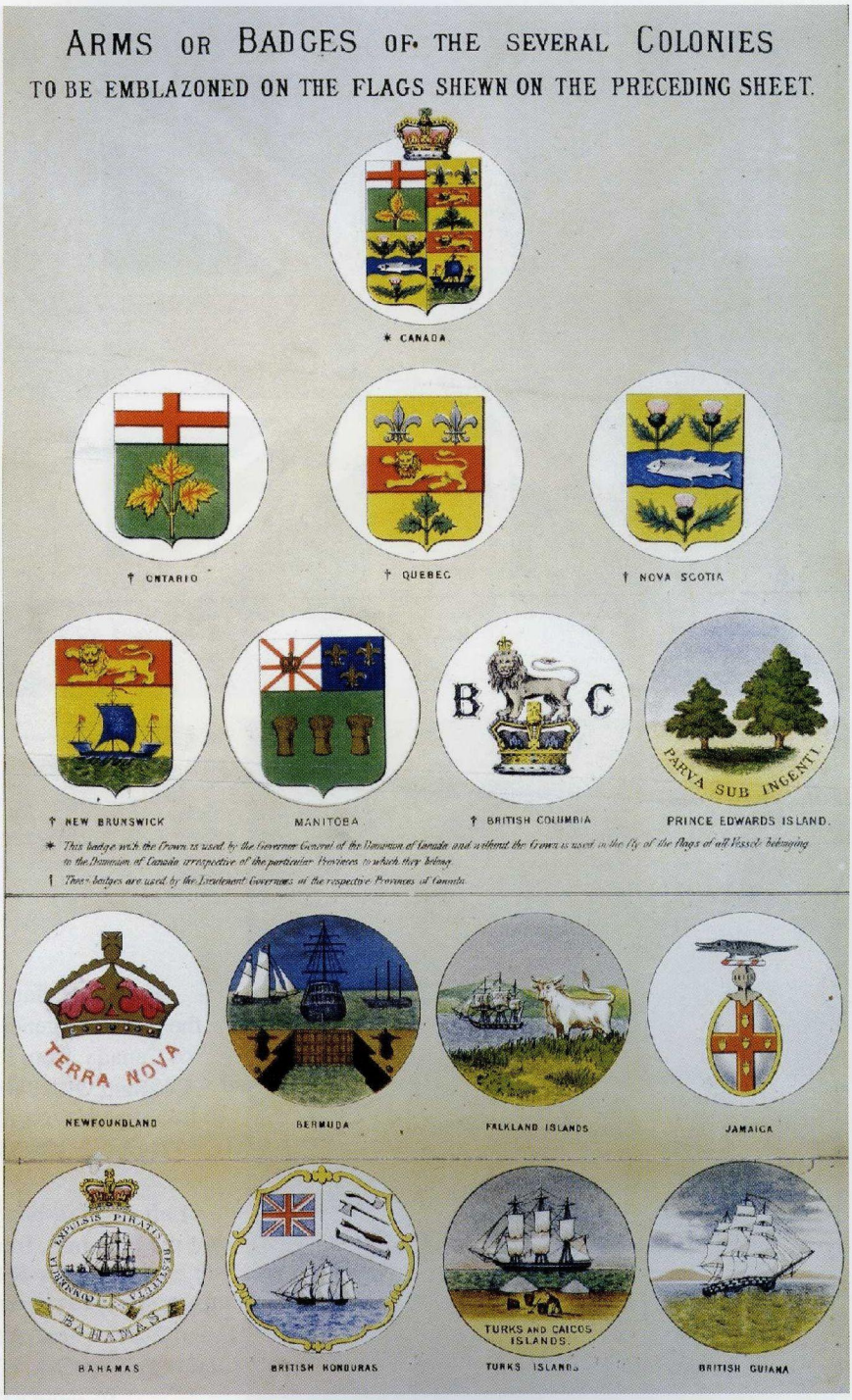


PLATE 5



Admiralty Flag Book, *c.*1875 (TNA CO 325/54). *See page 16.*

SIGNS, SEALS AND SYMBOLS OF IMPERIAL POWER 1600-1960

A VIEW FROM H.M. GOVERNMENT

Adrian Ailes

Introduction

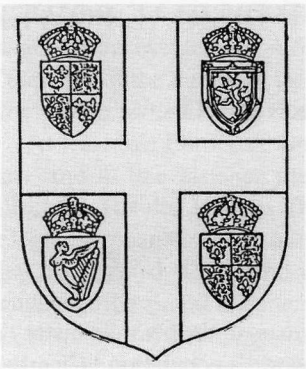
This paper addresses a huge topic covering nearly 400 years of the heraldic history of a vast empire that at one time included a fourth of the world's population.[1] Clearly, it cannot include the arms of every colony. It does, however, attempt to examine who, or more accurately which department or departments, within the British government were responsible for the oversight of the signs, seals, and symbols associated with its overseas possessions. In particular it asks: what do the government files now held at The National Archives of the United Kingdom reveal about the attitudes of government officials at home or of those abroad with regard to these emblems? Also, do these same emblems tell us anything about the views of the mother country to its dependencies? Not least, who designed these ensigns of imperial power? For convenience the paper is divided into four key periods, 1600 to 1850, 1850 to 1920, 1920 to 1939, and finally, 1939 to 1960 when increasingly the old hierarchical symbols of empire gave way to the flags and emblems of a new association of independent states – the Commonwealth.

First Phase 1600-1850

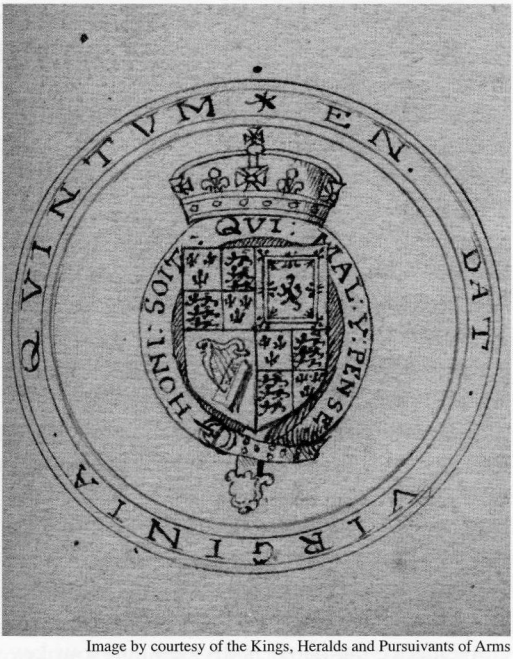
On 5 March 1496 Henry VII had issued letters patent to the Genoese-born Venetian navigator, John Cabot, granting him and his sons permission to sail 'under our banners, flags and ensigns' and 'to conquer, occupy and possess' non-Christian lands. Amongst the flags he planted in the New World (possibly Nova Scotia or Newfoundland) on 24 June 1497 was the royal standard of England consisting of the quarterly arms of France and England.[2] But these were still early days and, whilst it was hoped to conquer and exploit such new finds, there can have been little thought of separate armorial identities for any of them – such attributes were not to arrive (at least as far as England was concerned) for more than a century.

[1] This is a slightly expanded and revised version of a talk given at the XXVIII International Congress of Genealogical and Heraldic Sciences in Quebec in June 2008, the proceedings of which were published on CD ROM as *La rencontre de deux mondes: quête ou conquête* (*The Meeting of Two Worlds: Quest or Conquest*). I am grateful to Dr Mandy Banton for having read a draft of this article and making many useful suggestions. Crown copyright.

[2] C 76/178 m.8 [all documents cited, unless otherwise stated, are in The National Archives, UK]; Conrad Swan, *Canada: Symbols of Sovereignty* (Toronto 1977), p. 9; Niall Fergusson, *Empire: How Britain made the Modern World* (London 2003), p. 4. See also James Gairdner (ed.), *Letters and Papers ... Richard III and Henry VII* (London 1861-3), ii, p. 378.



Above, *Figure 1*: the arms of the Virginia Company of London, 1619 x 1624.



Right, *Figure 2*: Charles II's seal for Virginia, 1662 (CA record Ms Walker's Grants 2, p. 5).

Image by courtesy of the Kings, Heralds and Pursuivants of Arms

The first colonial arms were not technically granted to the colony but to the lords proprietor who ran the trading companies that owned the areas that were to become royal provinces and colonies. These arms were granted by the College of Arms under the seals of the kings of arms rather than, as in the case of later royal colonies, assigned by royal warrant under the sign manual of the sovereign. In this respect the new arms were private matters prompted by the need for a distinctive device to be placed upon a company seal. They did not, therefore, necessarily bear directly upon government thinking. Nevertheless, their semi-colonial aspect is clearly evident in the wording of the 1638 grant of arms to Sir David Kirke of the Newfoundland Company. It states that the arms have been granted 'for the greater honor and splendor of that *countrey* and the people therein inhabiting it' for it is 'necessary that there be proper and peculiar Armes thereunto belonging to be used in all such cases as Armes are wont to be *by other nations and countries*'.[3]

There was also a heavy *royal* influence in the design of these early company arms – powerful symbolic reminders of their royal foundation. The arms of the Virginia Company of London, drafted sometime between 1619 and 1624, included four crowned escutcheons, two of the royal arms of England (France quartering England), one of Scotland, and one of Ireland (**Figure 1**). Sometime after Virginia became a royal colony it opted for a seal consisting of the royal arms, crowned and surrounded by the Garter (**Figure 2**). This motif was later replicated many times throughout the

[3] Thomas Woodcock and John Martin Robinson, *The Oxford Guide to Heraldry* (Oxford 1989), pp. 156-7; Swan, *Canada*, pp. 85-6. The emphasis is mine.

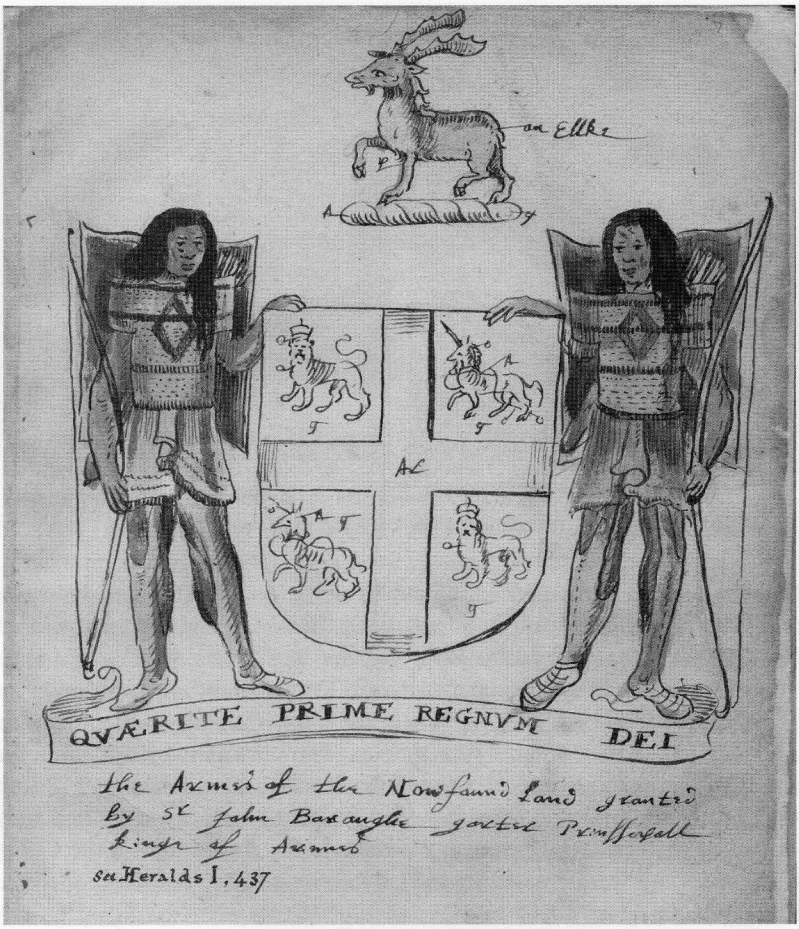


Image by courtesy of the Kings, Heralds and Pursuivants of Arms

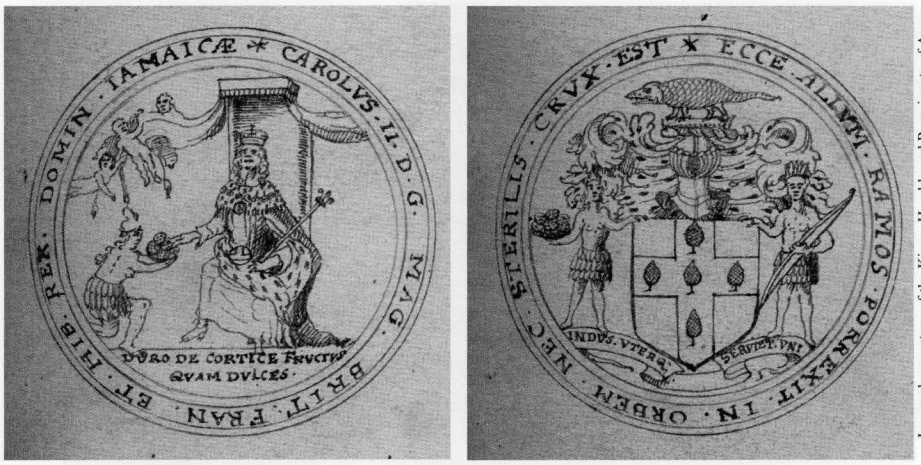
Figure 3: the arms of Newfoundland (Company), granted 1637.
(CA record Ms Miscellaneous Grants 4, fo. 7)

empire on the deputed great seals of other colonies; deputed great seals were those of the local colonial administration used in the place of the great seal of England.[4]

The arms of Newfoundland (or rather the Newfoundland Company) likewise bore royal motifs – this time the lion and the unicorn (**Figure 3**).[5] They also contained another early seed of an armorial tradition that was later to blossom throughout the

[4] 'New heraldic designs number 3', *CoA* new ser. 6 (1985), pp. 172-3. For deputed great seals see Hilary Jenkinson, 'The Great Seal of England: deputed or departmental seals', *Archaeologia* 85 (1935), pp. 293-338 at 335-8.

[5] The arms of Nova Scotia, possibly granted around 1625 by the Court of the Lord Lyon, also contained a royal motif – the Scots royal arms at the centre of a blue saltire on white (Swan, *Canada*, pp. 121-2).



Images by courtesy of the Kings, Heralds and Pursuivants of Arms

Figure 4: Charles II's seal for Jamaica, 1662; obverse (*left*) and reverse.
(CA record ms Walker's Grants 2, p. 5)

empire – the inclusion of indigenous peoples, flora, fauna, and local symbols. The Newfoundland supporters were two first-nation Beothuks and the crest was an elk. When a new seal was granted by royal warrant to the new colony of Jamaica in 1662 it incorporated a full achievement of arms for the island; the warrant in a sense endorsing the arms (**Figure 4**). Once again the mother country was symbolized by a cross of St George and, uniquely for the next two centuries, by a royal helm. But the arms also included as supporters an Arawak man and woman, four pineapples, and a crocodile crest. Despite the fact that Jamaica was a royal colony the arms were designed neither by government officials nor by the heralds at the College of Arms. Instead, they were created in 1661 by a churchman, William Sancroft, later archbishop of Canterbury.[6]

Jamaica's seal was unusual in incorporating the arms of the colony.[7] Normally where a colonial seal was two-sided the reverse depicted the royal arms, and the obverse the sovereign – often before indigenous people or settlers in suitable subjugation – or a depiction of a ship or ships, or a harbour or trading scene (**Plate 3**).[8] In the first half of the nineteenth century the royal arms on colonial deputed seals were regularly placed above a large cartouche shield bearing a symbolic device or landscape scene pertinent to the colony.[9]

[6] Seal illustrated in Woodcock and Robinson, *Oxford Guide to Heraldry*, p. 158. The arms of Jamaica were not officially granted until 1957. For Sancroft see CO 323/1377/11 quoting Frank Cundall, *Studies in Jamaican History* (London 1900).

[7] Later the seal of Jamaica conformed to the norm but still allowed the colony's arms to be included above the portrait of the sovereign, e.g. CO 5/285 dating to Queen Anne's reign, and see Conrad Swan, 'Arms from deputed Great Seals: an imperial phenomenon', *CoA* new ser. 9 (1991), pp. 13-39 (fig. 2).

[8] See Jenkinson, 'The Great Seal', pp. 335-8.

[9] Swan, 'Arms from deputed Great Seals', p. 22.

There is still no indication during this period of British government interference or even that of the heralds as to the design of colonial seals. More probably the inclusion of a device or pictorial scene on a colonial seal owed much to His Majesty's chief seal engraver as employed by the government in London. Sometimes contemporary government records describe in detail the new design as, for example, in the case of the Leeward Islands in 1678,[10] or those of the American colonies and certain Caribbean possessions in 1705,[11] but more usually they simply state that a seal is to be made by the chief seal engraver for the colony concerned. Occasionally the records went further and depict the new seal design, as for James II's seal for Bermuda.[12]

Second Phase 1850-1920

The big change came in the second half of the nineteenth century with Britain's growing role as a sea power, the rapid proliferation of her possessions in Africa and Asia, and a gradual awareness amongst the dependencies, especially the later dominions of Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa, of their own identity and self-importance.

In 1867 the dominion of Canada became the first self-governing colony within the empire and in 1868 arms were granted to the four provinces of Quebec, Ontario, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick with the intention they be quartered on a single shield placed on the deputed great seal of the new confederation (**Plate 4a**). According to a Colonial Office file, 'The devices were arranged after a good deal of consideration by the Secretary of State [for the Colonies] in connection with Mr Wyon [the chief engraver of Her Majesty's seals] the case being conducted chiefly through the Department of the Private Secretary, and in communication with the Canadian Delegates who were then in this country'.[13] The only mention of the heralds is to state that they recorded the royal warrant assigning the arms in the College on 21 September 1868. The same file reveals that it was, in fact, Wyon who suggested the quarterly coat for the whole dominion.

Indeed, inspiration for the designs of colonial seals, badges and arms in this second period (1850-1920) came from various quarters. Some were doubtless the result of official deliberations between the chief engraver of seals, the Privy Council and those administering the colony. Others owed more to traditional or historic designs. The arms of Bermuda granted in 1910, for example, were based on those of the old Bermuda Company, whilst the arms of the Straits Settlements granted in 1911 were largely taken from shields depicted on its deputed great seal of 1867 (**Figure 5**, over).[14] Increasingly, however, local considerations were taken into consideration. As already noted the arms of the four provinces that went to make up the Confederation of Canada were discussed with the Canadian delegation then in London. The arms of

[10] *CSP Col: America and West Indies 1677-80*, p. 298.

[11] *CSP Col: America and West Indies 1704-5*, pp. 511-12.

[12] CO 1/67 no. 43.

[13] CO 42/676 ff. 307-327v.

[14] R. W. E. Harper, 'Heraldry in Bermuda', *CoA* new ser. 4 (1980), pp. 312-16; Swan, 'Arms from deputed Great Seals', pp. 26-8. Other arms granted in this period were to Fiji (1908), South Africa (1910), Mauritius (1910), St Vincent (1912) and Australia (1912).

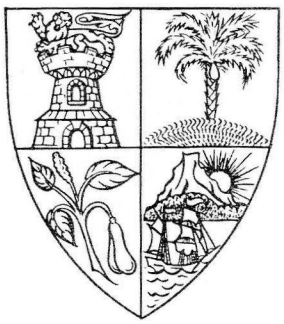


Figure 5: Arms of the Straits Settlements, granted 1911.

New Zealand, assigned by royal warrant in 1911, were initially chosen from national competitions.[15] The first flag of New Zealand was designed in 1834 by the Reverend Henry Williams, a former navy lieutenant, but was voted for by a group of Maori chiefs from the far north.[16] And the current flag of Australia was chosen out of 30,000 competition entries in 1901.[17]

Back in Britain, who, if anybody, in government was controlling these experiments in imperial heraldry? In an age when maritime and trading supremacy was paramount it soon became imperative that the British government keep a complete and up-to-date record of the flags flown not only by foreign countries but also by its own colonies. It, therefore, took its first steps to regularise imperial heraldry and especially the designs of colonial badges. Following an order of the Privy Council, it was the Admiralty which, on 14 September 1869, issued a directive requiring governors of colonies to fly the union flag with the badge of their colony at the centre – this badge should be, wherever possible, the same as the device depicted on the public seal of the colony. Ships of the colonies could use the same badge on the blue ensign (**Plate 4b**).[18] The colonies were asked to send a copy of their badges to the Admiralty. Those without badges were required to submit a design for approval by the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty.[19] It should be noted that it was neither the Colonial Office nor the College of Arms that had instigated this heraldic activity. Soon after, possibly as early as 1875, the Admiralty published a sheet of the approved badges which it presumably distributed to naval captains for the purposes of flag identification at sea. This was to become the Admiralty Flag Book – the official record of the arms, badges and flags of the empire (**Plate 5**).[20] Because the vast majority of the badges displayed were not

[15] *www.archives.govt.nz/exhibitions* (accessed July 2008). The crest was changed to a royal crown in 1956.
[16] ADM 1/8751/185.
[17] *http://foundingdocs.gov.au* (accessed July 2008).
[18] ADM 116/213; MT 9/183.
[19] May 1874. Since the seals of St Lucia and Cyprus bore no obvious distinctive device, rather than produce new expensive versions, a compromise was reached whereby the letters St L for St Lucia and CHC for Cyprus were adopted as flag-badges (ADM 116/213; CO 321/6 fos. 290ff).
[20] CO 325/54.

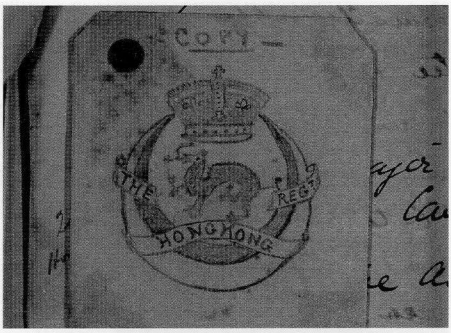


Figure 6: Draft design for cap badge of Hong Kong Regiment, 1892 (TNA WO 32/6815).

armorial, the College of Arms still had little influence or control over their design. Indeed, its only official role so far was to record the royal warrant and design of any new arms and presumably check them for heraldic accuracy.

From about the same time (the 1870s) the Colonial Office started to keep its own internal record of all the badges submitted to the Admiralty. These were kept in a book of hand-painted designs that was constantly annotated.[21] It includes, for example, the new flag of the governor-general of Canada: the union flag charged at its centre with the quarterly coat of Canada especially created, though not used, for the great seal of the newly independent dominion (**Plate 6a**). More usually the badges recorded by the Admiralty and Colonial Office were, as already noted, taken from existing seals, such as the maritime scene used by the Bahamas on its seal and now repeated on its flag (**Plate 6b**).

Another government department that needed to know the outcome of all this heraldic activity was the Board of Trade which looked after the interests of Britain's mercantile fleet and those of its colonies. In 1881 it wrote to the Foreign Office requesting details of the mercantile flags of the colonies. The Foreign Office passed the request on to the Colonial Office which supplied the Admiralty ruling on this, namely that all mercantile colonial ships should fly the British red ensign without any badge. The Colonial Office could not help but point out that the Admiralty had, however, inadvertently allowed the governments of South Australia, Victoria, and Canada to fly the red ensign charged with their respective flag-badges.[22]

At the same time the Treasury recorded relevant payments, such as those to the College of Arms for copies made of the royal warrants assigning arms to the dominions and for a certified copy of the original grant of arms to Newfoundland.[23] Another powerful government department, the War Office, in its turn looked after the regimental badges of the empire. In a nice touch of civil service sensitivity (or perhaps caution) it suggested that the crescent be removed from the 1892 design of the Hong Kong Regiment cap badge since it deemed it a 'creed' emblem (**Figure 6**).[24] Meanwhile the Privy Council continued to authorise the design of colonial seals and approve new arms.

[21] CO 325/54.
[22] MT 9/183.
[23] T 161/683.
[24] WO 32/6815.

Third Phase 1920-1939

The autonomous role of the dominions in the First World War and in the subsequent peace negotiations, the granting of arms to Canada in 1921, the new non-British flags of the Irish Free State and the Union of South Africa, the Statute of Westminster in 1931 which defined the constitutional position of Britain with her dominions, the growing separatist movements, and the change of sovereign in 1936 all brought the signs, seals and symbols of empire directly to H.M. Government's attention. Indeed, the new position of the governor-general in the dominions following the Statue of Westminster was anticipated heraldically by the introduction of a new flag for their post with less emphasis on the imperial government (the union flag) and more on the Crown as *the* symbol of unity across the empire (**Plate 7a**).[25]

Flags were particularly potent symbols of a growing realisation of independent nationhood. Technically, the union flag was still the official flag of every colony and during the First Word War the government had issued propagandist postcards depicting this ubiquitous symbol of empire alongside patriotic verses to remind its colonial subjects just whose empire they were fighting for.[26] Nevertheless, the dominions had already started to debate what precisely was the nature and design of their own national flags. In response, colonial administrators throughout the empire swiftly reported any rejection of the union flag back to the Colonial or Dominions Offices as this might indicate a growing separatist movement. For example, a Dominions Office file includes a cutting from the *Ottawa Citizen* of 11 May 1935 of a letter sent in by Frank McDonagh, National Secretary of the Native Sons of Canada, reaffirming that he did not want the union flag in the flag of Canada though he did not see this as anti-British.[27]

More serious problems arose with the Irish Free State and South Africa both of which adopted distinctly non-British flags. Here sensitivities were especially high. In May 1923 the Irish government adopted by usage rather than by statute the green, white and orange tricolour representative of popular revolution.[28] South Africa too opted for a non-British flag though a tiny union flag did appear in the design. Its adoption had nearly caused civil war in the 1920s and again H.M. Government and its representatives overseas were all too aware of the potential for controversy surrounding such matters. When in 1938 the deputy governor of Kenya was invited to open a building constructed by the South African community at Eldoret, Kenya, he immediately sought Colonial Office advice. The problem was that the union flag on this very public occasion was to be flown from the ground whilst the South African

[25] ADM 1/8758/189; WO 32/2458; Swan, *Canada*, p. 7.

[26] CO 323/732/35. For the importance played by flags in the development of nationalism within the colonies see Arundhati Virmani, 'National symbols under colonial domination: the nationalization of the Indian flag, March-August 1923', *Past & Present* no. 164 (1999), pp. 169-97, and CO 323/1929/4.

[27] DO 127/16.

[28] The Free State government did, however, have to co-operate regarding change of name and surnames; Susan Hood, *Royal Roots, Republican Inheritance. The survival of the Office of Arms* (Dublin 2002), pp. 121-2.

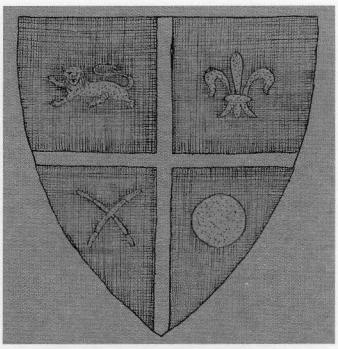


Figure 7: Arms for St Lucia proposed by its administrator, Edward Baynes, 1936 (TNA CO 323/1377/7).

flag would be flown from a staff on the building itself; it might, therefore, fly higher than the union flag. The then secretary of state for the colonies, Malcolm Macdonald, wisely told him not to worry and in the event the union flag was on such a tall flagpole that it was 'many feet higher than the South African Union Flag'.[29]

Arms too could be contentious.[30] In 1921 the colonial secretary, Winston Churchill, was particularly keen to ensure that Canada's wishes regarding her new arms were duly met. When Sir Henry Farnham Burke, Garter King of Arms, raised serious legal objections to the design put forward by the Canadian government Churchill was furious, believing that the dominion was being treated in his words 'as still being a Dependency of the United Kingdom'. The Canadian government and the king had, after all, already approved the design.[31] In fact, under the terms of the 1801 Act of Union, Garter was right and, following advice from the Attorney General, the Royal Proclamation assigning arms to Canada was duly revised.

But at least Canada had consulted the British. When in 1922 the Irish Free State sent its harp design to the Royal Mint so that a new seal could be cut the Colonial Office reacted with consternation since no prior permission had been sought from the British Government.[32] Most administrations were more compliant, with the Admiralty being informed of the new design and, if arms were involved, the College recording the royal warrant. The death of George V and the accession of Edward VIII in early 1936 resulted in a flurry of heraldic activity as colonies sought new coins, seals, flags and bunting to welcome in the new reign. Some colonial governors took an enthusiastic interest in these proceedings and there appears to be a genuine interest on their part to get the design right and put it through the correct channels. In February 1936, Edward Baynes, the administrator of St Lucia, suggested replacing what he called the 'geographical representation' as depicted on the colony's seal with a quarterly shield consisting of a lion passant guardant, a fleur-de-lys, sugar canes in saltire, and a bezant (**Figure 7**). He even correctly blazoned the arms explaining that

[29] CO 323/1576/3. Between 1927 and 1957 the union flag and South African flag were to be flown side by side and at equal height on all government buildings in South Africa. From 1957 to 1961, when South Africa became a republic and withdrew from the Commonwealth, only the South African flag was flown.

[30] For what follows see PC 8/21 and Swan, *Canada*, pp. 63-5.

[31] PC 8/931.

[32] Hood, *Royal Roots, Republican Inheritance*, pp. 120-1.

the fleur-de-lys represented the French occupation of the island 'as embodied in the Arms of Quebec'. In September he revised this by suggesting a white cross on black between a lion passant guardant in the first and fourth quarters and a fleur-de-lys in the second and third quarters. Whilst admitting that he knew little about heraldry, he explained that the new arms were based on those of Newfoundland. Clearly, he had an interest in the subject and was determined that the colony, despite its poverty, should have a proper flag-badge. In December the Colonial Office agreed that £50 from the funds of the government of St Lucia should be spent on the Royal Mint's fees for the preparation of a new seal incorporating the shield.[33] Baynes was fortunate. When in 1906 the governor of Bermuda had sought funds to pay the £20 17s fee quoted by the College of Arms he was told that the fund in question was not to be used for a 'luxury of this kind'.[34]

In September of the same year, 1936, Lieut.-Col. A. E. Beattie, the colonial secretary in Gibraltar, wrote to the Colonial Office in London regarding the arms of Gibraltar. He too was keen to put his colony's armorial affairs straight whilst admitting at the same time, 'I am completely out of my depth when it comes to questions of heraldry'.[35] When, again in 1936, a seal was needed for the new colony of Aden the resident and commander in chief, Sir Bernard Reilly, submitted a design depicting an Arab dhow with a brown hill in the distance. Fortunately the chief seal engraver at the Royal Mint opted for a more heraldic approach pointing out, 'We already have far too many of these dreadful naturalistic badges for colonies without adding to their number'.[36] The government also managed to exert some control over the use of its own devices across the empire and of flag-badges within individual colonies. In 1934 it advised the Fijian government to reject the use of the colony's arms for commercial purposes such as letter headings and souvenirs.[37] Three years later it prevented the Milk Marketing Department of the Maltese Government from putting the royal arms on the sides of its milk lorries.[38]

Meanwhile new arms, such as those of the Falklands (**Plate 7b**) and the Gilbert and Ellice Islands were added to the Admiralty's Flag Book.[39] The role of the College of Arms regarding the arms of colonies was still only one of giving heraldic advice (such as the re-introduction of the royal helm into the arms of Jamaica),[40] and making an official record of the royal warrant assigning the new arms. In 1937 the secretary of state for the colonies noted in a memo that, concerning grants of arms to colonial governments, the College had no delegated authority.[41] A year earlier Sir

[33] CO 323/1377/7. [34] CO 37/243. [35] CO 323/1377/6.
[36] CO 323/1377/8. [37] CO 323/1272/17.
[38] CO 323/1468/28 letter dated 8 October 1937. A change of monarch also precipitated new coinage and in the 1920s and 1930s much heraldic activity in the Royal Mint specially the coins of the dominions, Southern Rhodesia, Fiji, Mauritius, and Jamaica (MINT 7/42 and MINT 7/43).
[39] CO 323/1377/10; for the Falklands arms granted in 1925 see Rodney Dennys, 'Sovereignty and Heraldry', *CoA* new ser. 5 (1982), pp. 40-5. The arms of the Gilbert and Ellice Islands were granted in 1937.
[40] CO 323/1377/11 (1936). [41] CO 323/1483/6.

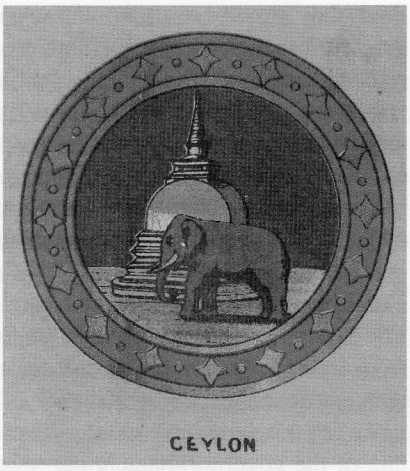


Figure 8: Flag-badge of Ceylon, from the Admiralty Flag Book, 1881 (TNA MT 9/183).

Gerald Woods Wollaston, Garter King of Arms, had written to the Dominions Office concerned that his position as the sovereign's deputy in matters armorial in all parts of the empire (except Scotland and Ireland) was not 'fully appreciated by Dominion Governments'. On 5 August 1936 Sir John Shuckburgh, deputy under-secretary of state at the Colonial Office, reassured him that the Dominions Office fully appreciated the extent of his heraldic jurisdiction but warned him not to approach the dominion governments even unofficially as this might result in the very reverse of what was desired. Shuckburgh added that 'The Dominions Office will keep a watchful eye on the subject, writing that, 'In the meantime they feel very strongly that the wisest course is to let matters rest as they are'. In other words, Garter was firmly but politely told not to meddle in the government's imperial affairs, even if heraldic.[42]

One person who did successfully interfere was Sister M. Farmer, a nun from Cheltenham. On 29 October 1935 she wrote to the Colonial Office requesting information on the emblems of certain colonies and dominions.[43] Her enquiry exposed a good deal of government ignorance and confusion with regard to imperial signs, seals, and symbols of power. For example, in response to her letter, the Colonial Office librarian discovered that the Ceylon Association and the Ceylon Trade Commission both used an elephant flanked by coconut palms whilst the official badge of Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) was said to be an elephant in front of a temple (**Figure 8**). When it was suggested that the 'Cingalese Lion' was surely a more appropriate badge for the island, a Colonial Office official questioned the wisdom of adding what he saw as yet another lion to the menagerie of imperial emblems.

As to the Sister's query regarding the floral emblems, no one knew if, for example, the pitcher plant was the floral emblem of Newfoundland or not. This particular plant ate insects thus rendering it unsuitable, and yet it had already been widely used during the recent silver jubilee celebrations for George V. Regarding the emblems of the Caribbean one civil servant responded, 'From what I know of the West Indies, I should

[42] DO 35/440/3.

[43] CO 323/1332/25.

think they would never consent to one emblem. Each tiny unit would have to have its own distinctive badge'. Another official noted that 'the pineapple can hardly be regarded as Jamaica's emblem. The banana w[oul]d be more appropriate'. A response was eventually sent to the Sister who in December 1935 thanked the Colonial Office and suggested a small pamphlet be produced containing all the useful information she had received. But as war approached the British Government was to be faced with even greater challenges than Sister Farmer and the question of pineapples versus bananas, and so her pamphlet was never produced.

Final Phase 1939-1960

The Second World War broke out in Europe in September 1939 and once again (apart from Ireland) the dominions and colonies rallied to Britain's support. During the war the government encouraged the use of the union flag as a patriotic symbol of imperial unity but this time gave greater freedom for local colonial administrations to fly the flag of the governor, namely the union flag charged at the centre with the colony's flag-badge.[44] Not surprisingly it was quick to take advantage of the propaganda value of the new arms of Malta which proudly displayed the George Cross medal presented by the king to the island for its bravery during heavy bombardment (**Plate 8a**).[45]

After the war, as power was transferred from old colonial administrations to new Commonwealth governments, so the British Government had to rethink its attitude towards the old imperial signs, seals and symbols. It bravely fought a rear-guard action to keep the union flag as the only official flag of the colonies but this was more and more regarded as a hierarchical symbol of an outdated empire. In April 1946 the governor-general of Malaya wrote to the secretary of state for the colonies asking if the old flag of Sarawak could fly alongside the union flag because there was strong local attachment to it and, anyway, local supplies of union flags were running out. The Sarawak flag was allowed but only as a temporary measure.[46] In 1954 the Queen recognised the traditional flag of Malta but it was not allowed to replace the union flag as the official flag of the island. Even when Singapore was granted full self-government its new flag could only replace the union flag internally – such was the inertia of old imperial ways.[47] Technically the College of Arms also had to register the flags of the newly independent Commonwealth nations which were still expected to clear the designs of their flags first with the Admiralty (now the Ministry of Defence), and then submit them to the Queen.

In the post-war world the winds of change were fast approaching. As colonies and, later, Commonwealth countries took a greater part on the world stage and joined other international organisations, so others started to ask what flags and emblems they bore. In January 1949 the United Nations asked the British Government for

[44] CO 323/1830/20, 21 and 22; CO 1032/493; ADM 1/11839.

[45] The arms were granted by royal warrant on 28 December 1943. The former governor of Malta, Sir William Dobbie, then staying in London, was asked to scribble a press release (which he did on hotel notepaper) to this effect, though Garter objected that his (i.e., Garter's) role in the process had not been publicly acknowledged. See CO 323/1870/10.

[46] CO 323/1870/16.

[47] CO/323/1929/4.

information on the flags and emblems of its colonies. Publications such as *Pear's Cyclopaedia* and *Webster's International Dictionary* asked the Colonial Office for similar information. International sporting events like the 1948 Olympics and the 1949 Lingiad gymnastics in Stockholm sought clarification for the flags of such competing 'countries' as the Gold Coast, Nigeria, Kenya, and Anglo-Egyptian Sudan. The British government replied that the union flag was still the correct flag for ceremonial occasions but conceded that the British blue ensign charged in the fly with the flag-badge could now be used for such events.[48] In 1957 the British High Commissioner in South Africa had to admit in a confidential memo that white South Africans no longer had any profound attachment to the union flag.[49] When in the 1960s it was agreed that those Caribbean islands that had become 'states in association with Britain', even though still British dependencies, could chose their own flags, the British government conceded that this 'seems to make sense and to be psychologically sound'.[50] With the liquidation of empire old imperial habits were making way for a new more international and more equitable order.

As Britain's attitude to empire became more ambivalent so its determination to maintain the old hierarchy of imperial symbols became more relaxed. Just as the government handed over power to the new nations of the post-war Commonwealth so it delegated much of the responsibility for the design of their new arms to the heraldic experts in the College of Arms. Almost immediately after the war the College was busy with new designs for the arms of the Solomon Islands (1946-47), Sarawak (1947; **Plate 8b**), North Borneo (1948), and the Falklands (1948).[51] When in 1950 the prime minister of Southern Rhodesia asked if he could put two lions on a dark blue field on his flag the Commonwealth Relations Office wrote to the Lord Chamberlain and Garter King of Arms for advice.[52] And in the same year, when the governor of the Falkland Islands submitted a possible design for the Falkland Island territories, now British Antarctic Territory, his design was found to be inappropriate and the government asked Garter to make alternative suggestions. Between 1950 and 1960 the College dealt with over a dozen new colonial and Commonwealth arms.[53]

As the empire was dismantled so too were the ornamental expressions of British control. Everywhere the union flag was lowered and the old hierarchical and

[48] CO 323/1894/6; CO 323/1894/7. [49] DO 35/8100.

[50] CO 1032/493. E. M. C. Barraclough, *Flags of the World* (London 1969), pp. 59-60.

[51] CO 323/1870/13 and 16; Dennys, 'Sovereignty and heraldry' (and see CO 323/1377/10). For College involvement in the flag for the Kathiri State in the Eastern Aden Protectorate in 1946-7 see CO 323/1870/12.

[52] CO 323/1911/11.

[53] Falkland Island Dependencies (1952, later British Antarctic Territory), Federation of Malaya (adopted by the Malay Rulers and approved by the Queen 1952; Malacca's arms were granted in 1951), Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland (1954), Ceylon (1954), Solomon Islands (1956), Ghana (1957), Jamaica (1957), Cayman Islands (1958), Trinidad and Tobago (1958, replaced in 1962), Hong Kong (1959), Singapore (1959), Nigeria (1960), Sierra Leone (1960), British Virgin Islands (1960). See the chapter on Commonwealth and Foreign Heraldry in Boutell (rev. JBL), R. O. Dennys, *Flags and Emblems of the World* ([Reading] 1967), and Barraclough, *Flags of the World.*

traditional symbols such as the imperial crown and British lion quietly discarded. In their place came a variety of indigenous emblems symbolic of a new, more democratic age (**Plate 8c**). The arms granted to colonies and Commonwealth nations during the 1950s included bows and swords, crescents and stars, a turtle standing erect, penguins, frigate birds and eagles, lions, tigers, leopards and antelopes, Chinese junks and dragons, an African mining shaft, a Melanesian dancing shield, cocoa and palm trees, and not forgetting the pineapples (not bananas) of Jamaica now at last officially granted to that island.

Conclusion

The views of H.M. Government regarding the signs, seals and symbols of the empire over which it ruled for nearly four centuries changed as that empire evolved from a disparate group of scattered outposts into a formally recognised empire, and finally into a voluntary association of independent nation-states. At first the British government appears to have had little interest in such armorial matters leaving the work to proprietary governors, seal engravers and, in the case of Jamaica, a future archbishop of Canterbury. Later the Admiralty, determined to control flags on the high seas, took over responsibility. Other government departments followed, notably the Colonial and Dominions Offices. And finally, as the sun began to set over empire, so Whitehall looked down Queen Victoria Street to the College of Arms for more than just simple confirmation and registration of its armorial acts.

The codified and hierarchical structure of seals and flag-badges that these government departments first imposed upon the colonies reflects the way in which the British government had sought to unify and control its imperial experiment. But if the rather regimented designs and constant use of time-honoured imperial symbols spoke of sameness, then in later years the extraordinary variety of what was depicted surely celebrated British interest, and possibly also pride, in the rich diversity and differences found in her changing empire and Commonwealth. True, some continued to reflect Britain's initial imperial ambitions and experiences: conquest, exploration, military might, and, of course, trade. And a few such allusions were even transferred into the flags and emblems of newly independent Commonwealth countries, painful or proud reminders of their colonial past; the British lion continues to roam the arms of a few Commonwealth countries even if its roar from the mother country is no longer heard. But whatever they stood for, and however traditional or distorted, or, indeed, simply ornamental, the signs, seals and symbols of imperial power still today offer a unique visual legacy of the British government's view of the empire which it sought to administer between 1600 and 1960, and for a short time beyond. For that reason alone they deserve much greater attention by historians and heraldists alike.

PLATE 6

Above (*a*), flag of the governor-general of Canada, from the Colonial Office flag book, 1865 x 1909 (TNA CO 325/54).

Left (*b*), flag-badge of the Bahamas, from the Admiralty Flag Book, 1881 (TNA MT 9/183).

See page 17.

PLATE 7

Above (*a*), design for flag of governor-general of Canada, 1931 (TNA ADM 18/32).
See page 18.

Below (*b*), arms of the Falkland Islands; proof for Admiralty Flag Book, 1925 (TNA CO 323/1377/10).
See page 20.

PLATE 8

Left (*a*), arms of Malta, 1943 (TNA CO 323/1870/10). *See page 22.*

Below (*b*), proposed arms for Sarawak drawn by Sir Algar Henry Stafford Howard, Garter, 1947 (TNA CO 323/1870/16). *See page 23.*

Bottom (*c*), arms of Ghana (CA record Ms I.82/98). *See page 24.*

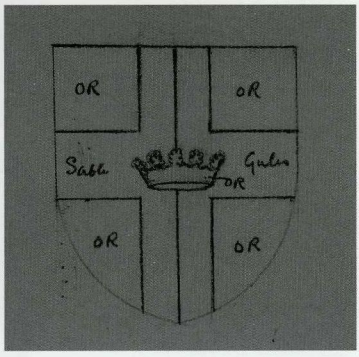


Image by courtesy of the Kings, Heralds and Pursuivants of Arms