HERALDRY : ARALTAS

- ## <u>Heraldry in Ireland</u>

For an overview of the development and position of Heraldry in the Republic of Ireland please checkout the website of the National Library of Ireland www.nli.ie where the Chief Herald of Ireland is based. The section dealing with the Office of the Chief Herald has a history of heraldry in Ireland and some fine examples of Grants made by that Office.

The present 'Irish Heraldic Authority' was only established (as a non-statutory body) on April 1st 1943 when the records of the Office of Arms in Dublin Castle were transferred from British control to the Irish government. But its predecessor, known as the Office of the Ulster King of Arms, was in existence since 1552 and on the transfer of the records to Irish control this title was attached by the British government to the English Norroy Herald of Arms in 1943. The assertion that the Office of the Chief Herald is "oldest Office of State" in Ireland is fanciful and completely without foundation as, in reality, the Office only dates from 1943 and legislatively, only from 2005.

Regarding the Office of the Chief Herald of Ireland and its functions, this Society has always advocated the provision of a sound legal basis for the State's delivery of heraldic services as the present legislation – *National Cultural Institutions Act, 1997* – Section 13 – is fundamentally flawed.

There are very few publications dealing specifically with Irish heraldry and the Office of the Chief Herald of Ireland, however, sections on the Irish situation do appear in several overseas publications. A number of these sections should be read with caution as certain unfounded assertions regarding the legal status and history of the 'Irish heraldic authority' have been unfortunately appeared in a number of publications.

The Society successfully achieved circa 28 amendments to the National Cultural Institutions Bill when it was considered by Seanad Éireann in 1996 and three more before it finally passed all stages in Dáil Éireann in early 1997. This is the legislation that covers the delivery of heraldic services in Ireland, however, it was fundamentally flawed in a number of respects.

Ever since 2000 the Society advocated the introduction of specific heraldic legislation in Ireland and to deal with the various flaws in the *National Cultural Institutions Act, 1997*. Finally, the Society drafted and presented the full text of a Bill to **Mr. Jimmy Deenihan, TD**, and **Mr. Jack Wall, TD**, in late 2005. This draft was eventually introduced as the *Genealogy & Heraldry Bill, 2006* and published by **Senator Brendan Ryan** in 2006. For further information on this Bill and other legislative campaigns by the Society, please see the section on **CAMPAIGNS** on the Home Page of this website.

• __Arms of the Society__

The Arms of the Genealogical Society of Ireland depicted above were formally presented to the Society at a Civic Reception on July 23rd 2001 in the County Hall, Dún Laoghaire, Co. Dublin.

At that handing over of the Letters Patent, the then Chief Herald of Ireland, **Brendan O Donoghue** outlined the significance of the Arms as follows. As much of the genealogist's work involves the examination of documents of various kinds, *two scrolls in saltire* were selected as the principal charge, or element, in the GSI shield. The scrolls are *banded vert,* as green is the colour peculiarly associated with Ireland. The tinctures (or colours) *azure and or*, or in today's language, blue and gold - the colours of the State - are used on the shield and there is also what the heralds describe as a *bordure treffly* which is reminiscent of shamrocks, another patently Irish symbol.

Because the use of a tree as an emblem by genealogical societies is so common, an effort was made in this case to devise an appropriate variation. In the event, taking account of the fact that the late O Conor Don was closely associated with the Society, it was decided to include a sprig of oak on the shield as a reference to the O Conor arms. And beneath the shield, is the motto*: **Cuimhnigí ar Ár Sinnsir***, which of course speaks for itself. *(Remember Our Ancestors)*

The Arms of the Society are beautifully set in gold on the Chain of Office worn by the Cathaoirleach (Chairperson) of the Society which was a gift to the Society by **Mr. Pat Shannon** of **Facet Jewellers** of Dún Laoghaire.

In addition to the shield, the Society requested and has been granted a badge to be used by its members. The design here is a rope formed into a trefoil which, in heraldry, is known as a *Hungerford knot*. In this case, the rope terminates in two acorns.

The letters patent include a banner, repeating the main elements of the shield. This is very much in keeping with the formula traditionally used in the grant of arms which states that the arms may be used on shield or banner.

(Pictured above, Mr. Brendan O'Donoghue, Chief Herald of Ireland presenting the Letters Patent to Mr. Rory Stanley, Cathaoirleach of the Society on July 23rd 2001)

The work of devising the GSI arms was carried out by **Micheál Ó Comáin**, consultant herald at the Genealogical Office, and the painting by hand of the arms and letters patent on vellum was done by **Philip Mackey**, one of our herald-painters.

As the only genealogical organisation in Ireland to have such a grant at that time, the Letters Patent were proudly on display at the National Library during the exhibition hosted to mark the holding of the **International Congress of Heraldic & Genealogical Sciences** in Dublin Castle in 2002. Indeed, since then they have appeared in *"The Complete Book of Heraldry"* by **Stephen Slater** (ISBN 0-7548-1062-3) as a fine example of a modern Grant of Arms by the Chief Herald of Ireland (page 245).

The grant of the Heraldic Badge described above was made possible by the kind generosity of **Barbara Mungovan Koch, MGSI** in memory of her late father **Joseph Mungovan, MGSI**. This badge is now referred to as the **"Mungovan Badge"** and is carried on our Membership Cards. It is this Heraldic Badge that now adorns the medallion that has been once again beautifully crafted by **Facet Jewellers** in Dún Laoghaire for the new Chain of Office for the President of the Society.

The President of the Society, **Mr. Tony McCarthy, MA, FGSI**, was invested with this new Chain of Office at a ceremony held in the historic Monkstown Parish Church, Co. Dublin on October 25th 2005 – see below. Mr. McCarthy is only the

second person to hold the office of President of the Society since its foundation 1990 and succeeds **Denis, O Conor Don** who died in 2000.

This ceremony was a celebration for the Society, its members and friends as it provided an opportunity to reflect on its many achievements since the foundation of the Society in 1990.

At the time, the Society was the only genealogical organisation in Ireland to have a Grant of Arms and, as such, our Members are very proud of this achievement.

• <u>Arms of the second President of the Society</u>

Tuesday 25th October 2005 was a special day in the history of this Society as it marked the 15th anniversary of the first meeting of the Founders' Committee establishing the Society in 1990 under the chairpersonship of **Frieda Carroll, FGSI,** and it also was the date of the inauguration of our new President and to receive new Fellows of the Society and to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the adoption of the European Flag.

Mr. Tony McCarthy, MA, FGSI

"A Glorious Extravaganza"

An Inter-Faith Memorial Service was held in the historic Monkstown Parish Church as part of this ceremony to mark the election of our new President, **Mr. Tony McCarthy, MA, FGSI**.

In the ornate surroundings of the wonderful and architecturally unique Church of Ireland church in Monkstown, a lone piper, **Mr. Tom Durkan** led the dignitaries, including the new President, Vice-President and clergymen up the centre aisle of the church to take their positions**.** Then the Rector, **Rev. Kevin Dalton** welcomed Members and friends of the Society to a very special event in the history of the Genealogical Society of Ireland.

It was fitting that the proceedings commenced with a guided tour of this historic church building by **Dr. Étain Murphy**, author of *"A Glorious Extravaganza – The History of Monkstown Parish Church"*. Dr. Murphy described the Society's decision to host these ceremonies in this church as "inspired" as the church is the oldest in continuous use in the area having Parish Registers dating back to 1669, its connections with Betham and its place in the history of our country – all of interest to the genealogist and historian alike. The great Irish genealogist and onetime Ulster King of Arms, **Sir William Betham**, was a churchwarden in this Parish and his Arms are depicted in the stained glass window in the south transept.

Dr. Murphy pointed out the many genealogical and heraldic features of the building, including the many memorials around the walls of this magnificent building. These memorials tell of an age of imperial wars, world wars, civic and religious service and the private dedication of families in the parish to their beautiful church building. Indeed, like all buildings of its age, Dr. Murphy explained, this church too is in need of repairs to deal with damp problems in the fabric of the building at one end. A fund raising campaign has been established to acquire the estimated €4.1 million required for this restoration project.

Remembering Our Ancestors

In keeping with the wishes of the Members of the Society, a short Inter-Faith Service of Remembrance was planned for this event, however, because of religious commitments the Jewish and Moslem representatives were unable to attend. However, **Fr. Seán Cassidy** and the Rector, **Rev. Kevin Dalton** proceeded with a very moving and deeply appropriate inter-denominational service, in which, **Sr. Bernadette de Lourdes, O.Carm**, the recently deceased Vice-President of the Society and **Rosa Parkes**, the American civil rights activist were both remembered in prayer.

The Society at Fifteen

The Cathaoirleach of the Society, **Mr. Rory Stanley, FGSI,** provided a brief outline of the past fifteen years since the foundation of the Society on October 25th 1990 in Rochestown, Co. Dublin. Mr. Stanley brought us through the development of the Society from the local to the national and international organisation that the Society is today. In pointing to the Arms of the Society and its Heraldic Banner, the Cathaoirleach explained the significance of each and then invited the clergymen to bless the work and the insignia of the Society.

Our Second President

The Cathaoirleach invited the new President, **Mr. Tony McCarthy, MA, FGSI** to come forward as the piper led the Vice-President, **Mr. James Davidson, FGSI** and the Membership Officer, **Ms. Hilary Byrne, MGSI** up, once again, through the Church with the new Presidential Chain of Office and his personal Coat-of-Arms. The Arms were designed by **Mr. George Lucki** of Canada and painted by Heraldic Artist, **Mr. Andrew Tully**, of South Africa and were presented to the Society by the **International Association of Amateur Heralds** for this occasion. The Vice-President placed the new Chain of Office on the President as the Membership Officer

presented him with his Arms. The organist, on recognising that Mr. McCarthy was a Corkman, immediately gave us a rendering of *"My Own Lovely Lee"*.


Personal Arms

Official Arms

Following the inauguration of the President, the Cathaoirleach announced the winners of the Presidential Annual Journal Award. As befitted the occasion, the President then announced his two nominees to the College of Fellows of the Genealogical Society of Ireland. **Garda Jim Herlihy, FGSI** was present to receive his certificate of appointment from the President.

ROOTS NOURISH THE TREE
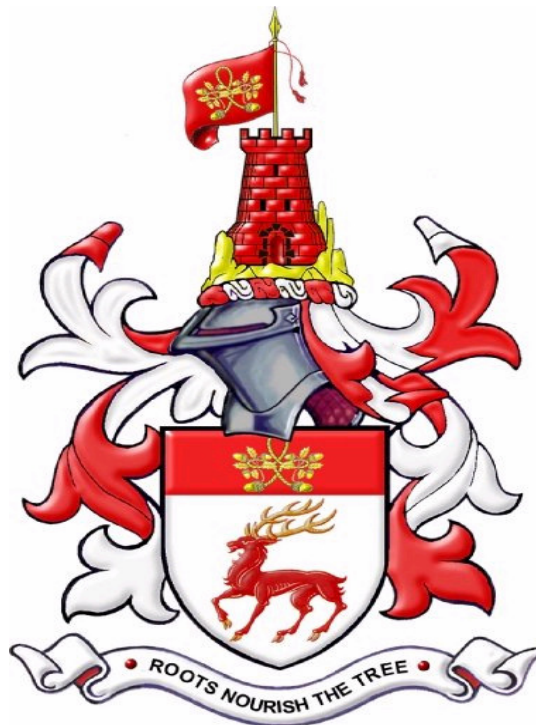
The European Flag

The President delivered the inaugural Presidential Invitation Lecture which will now be a feature of the October Evening Meeting each year to commemorate the foundation of the Society. The subject chosen by Mr. McCarthy was yet another important element of this Special Commemorative Service – the 50th Anniversary of the European Flag.

The story of the development and final adoption of this flag was a fascinating tale of discovery uncovering the very peripheral role, played by the then Chief Herald of Ireland, **Mr. Gerard Slevin**, in the design of this flag. Mr. McCarthy researched the on-line archives of the Council of Europe and discussed the matter with former colleagues of the late Mr. Slevin – all pointing to a non-Irish source for the Flag.

Following Mr. McCarthy's lecture a very up-beat Director of the **European Movement** in Ireland, **Mr. Brendan Kiely**, drew on the significance of the flag and stressed the importance of the European ideal.

A Service of Peace & Reconciliation for Europe was concluded with the European anthem. The evening ended with a splendid wine reception provided by the **European Commission Office** in Dublin.

Whilst, other names continue to emerge, will we ever know for sure who the actual designer of the Flag was? Sadly, it seems that officially sponsored sources, including obituaries published in 1997, advocating that an Irishman designed the European Flag cannot now be substantiated.

- ## **Arms of the third President of the Society**

The Society's third and current President, **Rory Stanley, FGSI** was duly inaugurated at a ceremony held at the Evening Meeting on Tuesday 8th December 2009.

(Pictured above: The Society's new President, Rory Stanley, FGSI, viewing the details of his new Arms presented to him by the International Association of Amateur Heralds).

The ceremony also included the investiture of four new Fellows of the Society, including the current Cathaoirleach, **Séamus Moriarty** and the Director of Archival Services, **Séamus O'Reilly** who were both appointed by the President. The Society's new Vice-President, **Maj. Gen. David, The O Morchoe, CBE** (Wexford) and the Society's Honorary Herald, **Andrew Tully, MAPM** (South Africa) were also invested as Fellows.

The new President was elected by the **College of Fellows** on May 7th 2009 and though he assumed his position on election, it was decided to host the official inauguration at the end of the year. A former Cathaoirleach, Rory Stanley, FGSI, succeeds **Tony McCarthy, MA, FGSI,** who held the position from 2005. The Society's first President, **Denis, O Conor Don, FGSI** held the position from 1991 until his death in 2000.

Rory received the Presidential Chain-of-Office from Vice-President, David, The O Morchoe and then the President invested the new Fellows with their warrants of appointment. Vice-President Stuart Rosenblatt, PC, FGSI accepted the Warrant of Appointment on behalf of Andrew Tully of South Africa.

At his inauguration, Rory, like his predecessor, was presented with his own personal Coat-of-Arms by the **International Association of Amateur Heralds**. The Society is very grateful to the IAAH for this wonderful presentation.

Mr. Rory Stanley, FGSI.

The Arms were designed and emblazoned by **Melvyn Jeremiah** of the United Kingdom serving as IAAH President and **Andrew Tully** of South Africa as GSI Honorary Herald.

The symbolism of the arms focuses on the Stanley heritage and the armiger's avocation of genealogy, his professional life and his appointment as President of the Society. The design of the President's personal arms incorporates the stag's head cabossed which is a feature of the arms borne by many branches of the wider Stanley family.

The field parted per pale and the partition line dancetty allude to the arms of Rory's mother's family, the Farrelly arms. The golden and blue tincture of the mantling and the ermine fur of shield relates to those often attributed to the Stanley name whilst again recognising his mothers ancestry.

The crest holds much symbolism as the scroll acknowledges the armiger's professional life as a newsagent and his genealogical background whilst the shamrock shows his passion for Ireland. Again, the Stanley colours of blue and gold are repeated on the sleeve.

The motto incorporates the Gaelic version of the surname and was the version of his name used when Rory was in primary and secondary school. It also encapsulates the historic transition from an English surname of a planter or Cromwellian soldier through intermarriage and assimilation over the centuries to become an Irish surname with a Gaelic rendition. Translated as 'Victory to Stanley', *de Stainléigh Abú* symbolises how the surname became Hibernicised as it incorporates the standard Gaelic war-cry and refers to Rory's own extensive One-Name Study of the surname Stanley where he has gathered information from persons of the name from around the world, especially, those with connections to Ireland.

- ## **International Association of Amateur Heralds**

The Association is a diverse assembly of professional and non-professional genealogists, heraldists, historians, and graphic artists dedicated to providing the general public with heraldic information and design guidance at no charge. The Association exists only in cyberspace and is composed of people from twenty-three nations amongst its membership. The IAAH was created to encourage the art and science of heraldry. http://www.amateurheralds.org/

Mr. Andrew Michael Tully, FGSI, Honorary Herald of the Genealogical Society of Ireland.

- **Armorial Gold**

Royalty Free!
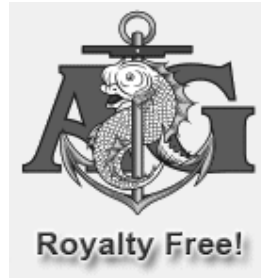
Whilst, some may argue that the mystique and exclusivity of heraldry and especially, the archaic language used, is something to cultivate in order to preserve this ancient art form within the custody of the learned few. This small, mostly well heeled band of gentlemen, view heraldry as part of a wider heritage of knights, nobles and, of course, royalty and all this lavishly topped with pomp and circumstance.

But whether they know it or simply deny it, the world has embraced heraldry in its many forms and adapted the symbols and emblems to meet altogether different and more modern and cosmopolitan requirements. Most of these new realities for which heraldry has now been successfully and imaginatively employed have nothing whatsoever to do with nobles, monarchs or monarchical systems of government. Republics like Ireland and South Africa have their state heraldic authorities whilst, others like the United States of America employ heraldry adapted to meet the needs of many sectors of government without having established a federal or official heraldic authority.

The popularity of heraldic symbolism is self evident as each football club, school or town council has its coat-of-arms proudly worn and displayed. To meet this growing interest in heraldic symbolism a Canadian firm has developed a unique collection of CD Roms designed to bring various heraldic symbols, insignia and terminology to the public at large. In this respect, **Mike Hamilton** and his team of artists have certainly achieved their worthy objective.

Indeed, far from just being pretty pictures drawn in a distinctively heraldic fashion, this collection is an educational tool in itself as it provides the correct description of each and brings its readers through the art of creating a coat-of-arms using the correct terminology which seems complicated and strange to many.

But Mike Hamilton's team has made unlocking the otherwise impenetrable language of heraldry an art form in itself. Purists may argue that popularising heraldry in this manner and especially, making available "off-the-rack" symbols and shields somehow cheapens or treats heraldry with less than the dignity in which it has become accustomed. To these harbingers of heraldic doom these CD Rom publications are a much needed wake up call.

Heraldry should not, especially, in Ireland and other republics become confused with nobility or the nonsense that Arms should only be granted to those that have "reached the port of gentry". It is a heritage shared by all and companies like Armorial Gold Heraldry Services will through their publications ensure the continued rise in popularity and ultimate survival of heraldry as an everyday form of symbolism. In

their **Gold Collection**, there are over 13,500 hand drawn heraldic art pieces presented in vector format for ease of use. These art pieces allow the enthusiastic amateur to experiment with various designs and to produce stunningly colourful results. The art pieces are royalty free and it is hoped to include various examples in this newsletter, from time to time, in our own endeavours to promote the study of heraldry and vexillology.   Armorial   Gold   can   be   contacted   through   their   website www.heraldicclipart.com or by mail to Armorial Gold Heraldry Services in the **USA** 14781 Memorial Dr. Suite #771, Houston, TX 77079 and in **Canada** 403-8, Gorge Road West, Victoria, BC, Canada, V9A 1L8

VEXILLOLOGY

- **Vexillology ….***What?*

Vexillology is defined as the scientific study of flags, banners and related emblems. It is concerned with research into the origin, meaning and significance of flags throughout the millennia right down to the present day. It is also concerned with the creation of a body of practice or disciplines for flag design and usage in both historical and modern terms.

(Pictured above: The Heraldic Banner of the Genealogical Society of Ireland)

Vexillology seeks to understand and explain the importance of flags and related emblems in the world today and to educate the general public on such matters. The word Vexillology is derived from the Latin *vexillum*, a term used by the Romans to refer to a kind of standard with a fabric hung from a horizontal crossbar on a pole, however, banners and emblems of various fabrics were also in use outside the sphere of Roman influence.

In Ireland, the use of flags and emblems has been viewed as a contentious and fractious aspect of our turbulent history and yet, we possess a rich vexillological heritage we barely understand and rarely appreciate. Indeed, before the arrival of heraldry in its present form to Ireland with the Cambro-Normans at the close of the 12th century and its gradual adoption by the native Irish over the next four centuries,

great occasions hosted by Irish rulers were all described as having been accompanied by their banners.

We have more than a glimpse of the design of these tribal banners as many of the ancient Celtic mythological symbols employed were taken over into the heraldic format with the adoption of coats-of-arms by the Gaelic world. Some in the world of heraldry have maintained that this, in itself, is evidence of the existence and development of "Gaelic Heraldry" prior to the Norman Invasion. Whether this is the case or not, it certainly proves the existence of a highly developed and stylized form of vexillology amongst the native Irish.

The symbols used by the various Septs in heraldry to affirm descent and/or affiliation by blood, were clearly adopted from a much more ancient vexillological usage and supported by genealogies maintained by hereditary custodians. The heraldic use of the Red Hand, for example, by a number of the Ulster Septs proclaims a believe in a common ancestry and this phenomena is noted throughout the country with Septs identifying with each other through either a mythical or actual common ancestral symbolism. In modern times, this symbolism has crept in to the heraldic depictions used by Towns, Cities and Counties throughout Ireland. Indeed, much of this symbolism has been adopted by countless clubs, associations, institutions and corporate bodies over the years.

(Pictured above: The Livery Flag of the Genealogical Society of Ireland)

Whilst, as we have seen that official recognition is afforded to the closely related subject of heraldry through the Office of the Chief Herald of Ireland, no comparable status is provided by the State for vexillology. The Constitution of Ireland provides a description of the National Flag as a tricolour of Green, White and Orange (Article 7), but other than heraldic banners covered by Letters Patent issued by the Office of the Chief Herald, there is no official register of flags or banners in Ireland. Indeed, the protection afforded by the Letters Patent issued by the Chief Herald of Ireland has come under some serious questioning regarding the whole legal status of the office in Irish law. A point frequently raised by this Society in its campaign for the introduction of an Irish Genealogy & Heraldry Bill since 2000, indeed, the assignment

of duties in respect of vexillology to the Chief Herald of Ireland forms part of this Society's proposal for such legislation.

Vexillology, like heraldry, is as much a part of our nation's heritage. However, it is surprising that irrespective of its close connection to the development of various cultural, local and civic identities throughout the island of Ireland, historians, including genealogists, often overlook vexillology in their research. One reason for the neglect of vexillology in Ireland may well be the lack of any central register for flags and banners. A central vexillological register would facilitate the recording of vital information on the development of each flag or banner, including its artistic design, local or national significance, designer, maker and current or historic use. As a vexillological register could easily be established by the Chief Herald, this Society has advocated the expansion of the roll of the office within a new legislative framework of in the *Genealogy & Heraldry Bill, 2006*. – See CAMPAIGNS

• <u>Flags of the World</u>

An interesting website devoted to vexillology is the FOTW – Flags of the World website which contains short histories and colour depictions of the flags and banners of various countries, cities, towns and provinces, both historical and still in use today. http://flagspot.net/flags/

• <u>Future Developments</u>

The Society is currently establishing a *'Register of Arms, Flags, Banners and Badges'* in order that individuals, clubs, organisations, sporting bodies and others may register their own emblems and to record the symbolism and history behind the designs of each.

This new Register will be publicly accessible on the Society's website and evidence of registration will be provided to each person or organisation registering their coats-of-arms or emblems.

Please check back for regular updates.

Michael Merrigan, MA, FGSI
General Secretary
Genealogical Society of Ireland