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Heraldry Ireland Araltas Éireann

A Definition of

‘Matrimonial and Family Arms’

Presentation No. 3 of 2024



Heraldry and Civil Marriage Equality



*Campaign badges from the 2015 Marriage
Equality Constitutional Referendum in
Ireland*

Marriage Equality is now available in most advanced democracies around the world and, indeed, in many of these countries there is also a strong heraldic tradition.

Some state heraldic authorities have been quick to implement changes to their heraldic conventions to permit the registration of the arms of same sex couples, however, most followed the convention applied for opposite sex couples. This convention usually involves impaled arms, dexter for the husband and sinister for the wife. This system also has the inheritance of the arms based on the traditional family.

Clearly this situation could be considered unsatisfactory or inappropriate, on many levels, for a same sex couple and therefore, a new category of arms is required to properly recognise same sex marriages.

Why is a definition required?

The heraldic conventions, commonly known as the “*Laws of Arms*”, as operated in the various jurisdictions with state heraldic authorities, and in others where heraldic traditions have been maintained, normally only allow descent of arms through the male line equally to his legitimate children.

This situation is clearly not appropriate for the same sex marriages and therefore, a new category of arms is required to facilitate the assumption of “joint arms” by same sex couples and to ensure the inheritability of such arms.

Marriage equality requires meaningful recognition and not to be treated as merely an adjunct to existing heraldic practices.



Formulation of a definition of 'Matrimonial and Family Arms'

In March 2024, arms were commissioned from the renowned Heraldist and Heraldic Artist, **Dr Antonio Salmerón Cabañas, SHA, FGSI**, of Madrid, Spain, (see: www.blason.es) for a newly married same sex couple in Madrid, Darryn Carlo and Roberto Luchoro.

The arms were subsequently registered with **Martin Goldstraw, JP, FRSA, Scot.**, the Director of *The Armorial Register – International Register of Arms* in the United Kingdom. (see: Registration no. 0693 (Vol. 4) on www.armorialregister.com)

The arms were also registered with the **International Society of Commoners Heraldry** as '*Matrimonial and Family Arms*'.

The absence of a clear definition of what '*Matrimonial and Family Arms*' actually means became readily apparent and, therefore, a new definition was formulated by the much respected and well-known heraldry experts above in consultation with **Michael Merrigan, MA, FGSI**, of *Heraldry Ireland : Araltas Éireann* and General Secretary of the **Genealogical Society of Ireland**.

Definition of Matrimonial and Family Arms

"Matrimonial and Family Arms" recognises heraldically "marriage equality" as defined by law as a union between persons of the opposite sex or persons of the same sex and, in doing so, the arms are jointly owned by the parties to the marriage, and, depending on the jurisdiction and any legal obligations, they are inheritable in the normal manner of arms or may be assigned or bequeathed by the surviving party as their personal property to whom they so wish, noting at all times, that such a transfer should be recorded in any register or roll of arms concerned, however, in the case of a dissolution of a marriage, the arms may be assigned or lapsed as agreed by the parties and again, such should be recorded in any register or roll of arms concerned. *(MGS Definition, 2024)*

Res: 24/04/1822 (4th April 2024)



Definition in the Spanish language

Definición en el idioma español

El concepto de "Armas Matrimoniales y Familiares" reconoce heráldicamente la "igualdad matrimonial", definida por la ley como una unión entre personas del sexo opuesto o del mismo sexo, al hacerlo, los escudos de armas se convierten en propiedad conjunta de ambas partes del matrimonio, dependiendo de la jurisdicción aplicable y de las obligaciones legales en cada caso, los escudos pueden ser heredados o legados —transmisión mortis causa—, o pueden ser donados por sus titulares o por el cónyuge superviviente como su propiedad personal a quien o quienes se desee, esta transmisión debe ser anotada en un registro o armorial correspondiente. En caso de disolución del matrimonio, los escudos de armas pueden ser asignados a una de las partes o ambas pueden desistir de su uso según lo acordado entre ellas, y nuevamente, tal hecho debe ser anotado en un registro o armorial correspondiente. *(MGS Definición 2024)*

Dr. Antonio Salmerón Cabañas, SHA, FGSI
Honorary Herald of the Genealogical Society of Ireland

www.blason.es



“Laws of Arms” & “Laws of the Land”

For the avoidance of any doubt, the heraldic conventions, commonly known as the “*Laws of Arms*”, are not as they say, or as some purists erroneously and illogically maintain, “written in stone” – they have evolved over time to reflect the needs and tastes of society.

Innovation frequently occurred, for example, the introduction of “Cadency” by John Writhe, Garter King of Arms, around 1500, and other changes needed to conform to the law of the land, changes in custom or use, wider inheritability and accessibility, and latterly, to recognise and embrace the values of gender equality and, of course, marriage equality.

This new definition seeks to be a guideline in the provision and design of arms to more accurately reflect marriage equality and, therefore, *Heraldry Ireland : Araltas Éireann* encourages other organisations to follow the example of the Board of Directors of the *Genealogical Society of Ireland* in adopting and endorsing this definition of ‘*Matrimonial and Family Arms*’.

The Armorial Register – *International Register of Arms*

The Genealogical Society of Ireland registered its Arms and those of its Presidents with *The Armorial Register*.

PRÉCIS OF THE MAY LECTURE

Tuesday May 9th 2023—'Europe Day' we were treated to a talk on '*Do It Your-self Heraldry - The Design, Assumption, and Registration of Armorial Bearings*' by **Martin Goldstraw**, one of the founding directors of **The Armorial Register Ltd** and author and illustrator of the Cheshire



The Armorial Register Crest

Heraldry website. After a short delay in connecting due to a technical issue, Martin began by outlining what an armiger is and how, even though throughout the world there are several heraldic authorities, including our own Chief Herald of Ireland, arms have been assumed well before any form of authority existed so anyone who assumes arms of their own will be in good company.

We were then guided through the process and pitfalls of designing one's own arms, whether this be truly DIY or via the use of "amateur" assistance or a professional heraldic artist or designer. The talk was illustrated by both good and bad heraldry and although we saw some truly awful examples of DIY arms, Martin was always careful to balance these by illustrating some excellent examples of assumed arms.

Martin then outlined some of the many benefits of registering ones assumed arms using, as an example, the benefits accrued by registering with The Armorial Register but always being careful to point out that other services are available. This lecture is now available on the Society's YouTube Channel (see page 1). (<https://www.armorialregister.com>)

Check out: <https://www.armorialregister.com>

The International Society of Commoners Heraldry



The **International Society of Commoners Heraldry** is a private **Facebook group** for those who choose to embrace heraldry in the contemporary world as a means of representing themselves using the traditional symbolism of heraldry.

What is a Commoner? The *Collins Dictionary* defines 'Commoner' as 'a person who does not belong to the nobility'.

As an international group it incorporates different heraldic traditions and rules, although, there are broad basic principles that tend to be universal and others that vary considerably.

For example, in some countries “supporters” are regarded as the exclusive right of nobles, incorporated bodies or institutions, however, in other countries “supporters” are purely decorative.

The group produces a very interesting **Roll of Arms** and issues certificates for armigers included on the Roll.

See: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/societyofcommonersheraldry/>



Links of Interest

<https://www.armorialregister.com>

&

<https://www.blason.es>

Also please check out the following social media accounts hosted by the ***Genealogical Society of Ireland***, of which, *Heraldry Ireland : Araltas Éireann* is a Specialist Branch.

The Society: <https://www.facebook.com/familyhistory.ie>

Heraldry Ireland: <https://www.facebook.com/heraldry.ireland>

Vexillology Ireland: <https://www.facebook.com/flags.ireland>

Instagram: <https://www.Instagram.com/GenSocIreland>

Twitter / X: <https://www.twitter.com/gensocireland>