Achievements of Arms: A Historical and SCA Perspective

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I. Introduction

ACHIEVEMENTS of Arms are the pinnacle of heraldic display, both historically and in the Society. Beginning as a way of showing a person’s Arms and tournament crest at the same time, they evolved into an elaborate and beautiful art form augmenting the display of Arms. As with all historical practices of Arms, customs of Achievements varied by jurisdiction and heraldic tradition, but as with the practice of Armoury in general, sufficient commonalities exist that a general picture readily emerges.

Additionally, Achievements are an underappreciated and woefully underused aspect of Society heraldry. Although the unregulated at the Laurel level, most individual kingdoms are known to have sumptuary laws or guidelines governing the use and display of some or all of their components. Just under three-quarters of the kingdoms in the SCA have codified rules, customs, or traditions governing all or part of the components of Achievements of Arms. These rules are generally intended to serve as heraldic recognition and acknowledgement of advancement in the SCA (over and above the badges and regalia already conferred by such advancement), but vary widely by kingdom in both scope and level of detail.

This article will outline the historical development of Achievements, noting some of the regional differences in customs, and the various customs and traditions on the various Kingdoms’ regulations will be presented and discussed in a historical context.

II. Achievements of Arms

First, though, we will cover the most basic question: What are Achievements of Arms? Rodeny Dennys, former Somerset Herald of Arms in Ordinary and former Arundel Herald of Arms Extraordinary, gives the following definition in The Heraldic Imagination [1]:

“Achievement: The full armorial honors of armiger, e.g. shield, crest, wreath, mantling, and helm, with supporters as appropriate.” (p. 206)

For a Continental perspective, consider the definition given by Dr. Ottfried Neubecker, founder, president, and honorary president of the Deutsche Heraldische Gesellschaft e.V. [2], defines them thusly [3]:

“An achievement of arms is the full armorial bearings consisting of the heraldic escutcheon, the armorial helmet, and the crest with the mantling attached to the helmet. High rank of specific personal privileges can be expressed through additional decorative devices.” (p. 52)

The component parts of an Achievement, as mentioned by Mr. Dennys and Dr. Neubecker, are:

• Escutcheon: the shield, bearing the Arms of the armiger.
• Helm: stands above the escutcheon, supporting the torse, mantling, and crest. Ecclesial Arms and women displaying their Arms on a lozenge do not use a helm.
• Torse: rope of twisted cloth, standing atop the helm, from which the mantling descends.
• Mantling: twisting strands of cloth draping from the top of the helm and off to both sides, forming a backdrop for the upper half of the Achievement. Always appears with a Helm, and
• Coronet: as appropriate for the bearer. Can stand atop or replace the torse.
• Crest: figure which stands above the helm as an additional type of Armorial bearing. Crests always appear atop the helm, so ecclesial armory and arms borne on a lozenge do not have crests.

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• **Supporter(s):** figure(s) which stand behind (usually singly) or to the side (singly or in pairs), supporting the escutcheon.

• **Compartment:** a place upon which the supporters can stand. Often a small grassy knoll, but if the supporters are not terrestrial, other forms appear as well.

• **Motto:** the armiger’s personal motto, usually displayed on a banner. The placement of the motto varies by heraldic jurisdiction, though it usually appears beneath the escutcheon atop the compartment.

![Diagram of heraldic achievement](image)

**Figure 1. The Achievement of the College of Arms of Great Britain [4]**

Figure 1 shows an annotated example of a full Achievement, those of the College of Arms on the United Kingdom – an admittedly modern drawing, but an identical emblazon (less the compartment and motto) appears in Lant’s Roll of 1595 [5]. Each component of an Achievement has a unique and fascinating history, and each will be discussed in turn from both a historical and Society context.

### III. Historical Analysis

Achievements of Arms did not appear fully-formed overnight. As with all aspects of Armory, they evolved over time due to a variety of societal and artistic factors. While it is difficult to pinpoint the beginning of the Achievement, visual evidence seems to suggest that they began with knights attempting to decorate their new full-faced helms for the tournament to make them more grander, striking, and (likely) intimidating for the tournament.

#### A. Crests

Crests are an additional armorial bearing, usually in the form of a figure or artifact, which stand atop the helm (which themselves will be discussed later). Milton [6] states that they were originally intended to ward off blows to the head and neck, but this seems unlikely: strikes to the crest, especially transverse strikes, would induce a strong torque on a knight’s neck, a very dangerous and disadvantageous thing in combat. It is much more likely that they were instead grand displays for the tournament.

The earliest crests appear to be simple fans attached to the top of the helm, painted with the same design as the Arms. Figure 2 shows an example from the *Große Heidelberger Liederhandschrift* (commonly known as the *Manesse Codex* folio 071v. [7])

![Image of crest](image)

**Figure 2. Arms and Crest of Herr Kristan von Hamle. *Manesse Codex* folio 071v. [7]**
Manesse Codex, ca. 1304 - 1340). Though a book of songs, it contains many large and beautiful illustrations of knights and other armigers both in and out of armour. In almost all cases the Arms are coupled with a crest-topped helm, and the vast majority of the knights in combat also bear crests atop their helms. The helm and crest do not always appear above the Arms (though that is a common depiction), but always appear on the same page, often next to the shield. Neubecker [3] infers that this means that the Arms and the helm and crest were seen as separate entities at that time, a point which is hard to argue against. However, though separate entities, the variety of crests and their physical proximity to their associated Arms indicates that they were strongly associated with an individual person in the same manner as the Arms. This seems to be affirmed by their use in a practice called the “Helmschau”. Described by King René in his Traicté de la Forme de Devis d’un Tournoi (“Treatise on the Form and Organization of a Tournament”) and recounted in both Dennys [1] and Neubecker [3], before the tournament began, the helms (with crests) would be set out so that the ladies of the Tournament could review them and call to account for their actions any combatants who had been behaved in a manner unbecoming their status:

“When the helms have been set up and displayed, then ladies and damsels may come, with lords, knights and esquires, to see all of them. The judges should lead them three or four times around the cloister to see the crests. And there should be a herald or pursuivant, who will tell the ladies the name of the person whose crest is before them. And if one of them has spoken ill of the ladies, they may touch his crest, and the matter will be considered the next day. All the same no one will be beaten at the tourney except by the decision of the judges, and after the case has been debated and proven and found to merit punishment: and in that case the malefactor will be well beaten, so that he feels it in his shoulders, and so that he will not in the future speak ill of the ladies, as he did before.” [8]

This clearly shows that in at least one formal context (and there is no more formal context than a medieval tournament) that man’s crest, and not his Arms, was used to identify him.

Common themes in crests are wings, horns, demi-animals and demi-human figures (both with and without arms/forelimbs), human and animal heads and limbs (arms and legs), three-dimensional fleurs-de-lys (particularly in association with the French royal family), peacock feathers, and charges repeated from the Arms. Full animals (generally in a balanced posture like passant or statant, or close for birds) are much more common in the British Isles than they are Continental Europe. Fish occur both palewise and fesswise.

Additionally, an especially common Germanic trend can be seen in Figures 2 and 3 above: the charge or pattern of the field being mirrored on the crest. This is especially notable on wings (both singly and in pairs, displayed and addorsed) and horns of various types – even when there are no winged or horned charges on the Arms. Occasionally, the whole of the Arms are repeated on the wings (including non-ordinary charges, but always for simple armory).

As for the granting of crests with Arms, Fox-Davies [10] states:

“For the last two certainly and probably nearly three centuries, no original grant of personal arms has ever been issued without it containing the grant of a crest…” (p. 57)

He goes on to say:

“Whilst arms may exist alone, and the decoration of a shield form the only armorial ensign of a person, such need not be the case; and it will usually be found that the armorial bearings of an ordinary commoner consist of shield, crest, and motto. To these must naturally be added the helmet and mantling, which become essential to other than an abbreviated achievement when a crest has to be displayed. […] The motto is usually to be found but is not a necessity, and there
are many more coats of arms which have never been used with a motto than shields which exist without a crest.” (p. 58)

While this is admittedly a post-period description – Fox-Davies’ book was first published in 1909, and thus the three centuries of which he speaks begin in 1609 – a quantitative analysis of crests in Wappenbücher from German and Austrian (the Holy Roman Empire) seems to offer good evidence in support of his statement. Specifically, Arms shown with helm and mantling in eight Wappenbücher were analyzed, and broken down into three categories:

- Arms with crest
- Arms without crest, apparently finished (i.e. mantling colored)
- Arms without crest, apparently unfinished (i.e. mantling uncolored, Arms not yet colored, Arms as yet unfinished - sketched, outlined, or drafted, etc.)

The eight Wappenbücher (all dating from the 15th to 17th centuries, most pre-1600) are:

- BSB Cod.icon. 308, Nikolaus Bertschi’s Wappenbuch besonders deutscher Geschlechter (1515 – 1650) [12]
- BSB Cod.icon. 308 u, the Ortenburger Wappenbuch (1466 – 1473) [13]
- BSB Cod.icon. 310, Anton Tirol’s Wappenbuch (end 15th C. – 1540) [14]
- BSB Cod.icon. 312 c, the Scheibler/sches Wappenbuch (1450 – 17th C.) [9]
- BSB Cod.icon. 326 b, the Stamm- und Wappenbuch des Freiherrn Wolfgang Leonhard Unverzagt von Ehenfurth und Petronell (1574 – 1637) [15]
- BSB Cod.icon. 333, titled for short the Großes Wappenbuch³ (1583 – 1700) [16]
- BSB Cod.icon. 390, Stephan Brechtel's Wappenbuch des Heiligen Römischen Reiches (1554 – 1568) [17]
- BSB Cod.icon. 392 d, simply titled Wappenbuch (first half 16th C.) [18]

The results are shown in Table 1:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Archival Name</th>
<th>Arms Counted</th>
<th>With Crest</th>
<th>No Crest, Finished</th>
<th>No Crest, Unfinished</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BSB Cod.icon 308</td>
<td>1,010</td>
<td>858 84.95%</td>
<td>5 0.50%</td>
<td>147 14.55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BSB Cod.icon 308 u</td>
<td>511</td>
<td>501 98.04%</td>
<td>5 0.98%</td>
<td>5 0.98%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BSB Cod.icon 310</td>
<td>772</td>
<td>770 99.74%</td>
<td>1 0.13%</td>
<td>1 0.13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BSB Cod.icon 312 c</td>
<td>625</td>
<td>625 100.00%</td>
<td>0 0.00%</td>
<td>0 0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BSB Cod.icon 326 b</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>16 100.00%</td>
<td>0 0.00%</td>
<td>0 0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BSB Cod.icon 333</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>151 97.42%</td>
<td>4 2.58%</td>
<td>0 0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BSB Cod.icon 390</td>
<td>2,809</td>
<td>2,768 98.54%</td>
<td>32 1.14%</td>
<td>9 0.32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BSB Cod.icon 392 d</td>
<td>5,220</td>
<td>4,944 94.71%</td>
<td>232 4.44%</td>
<td>44 0.84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total (All Arms)</strong></td>
<td>11,118</td>
<td>10,633 94.64%</td>
<td>279 2.51%</td>
<td>206 1.85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total (Finished Arms)</strong></td>
<td>10,912</td>
<td>10,633 97.44%</td>
<td>279 2.56%</td>
<td>--- ---</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From this, it can be seen that in the overwhelming majority of instances (greater than 95% of all counted Arms), Arms appearing with a helm and mantling also have crests. If apparently unfinished pieces of armory are excluded,

² No conscious decision was made to exclude Rolls from other heraldic jurisdictions. The BSB has made German Rolls of Arms easily available, and the relatively few English rolls of Arms do not generally include crests – Anthony Richard Wagner, Richmond Herald, states that no English roll of arms before the beginning of the 16th Century includes crests [11]. The eight armorials discussed here are simply the ones the Author had on hand at the time. If time allows, this article will be expanded with the analysis of other Armorials (to include Siebmacher’s Wappenbuch of 1605 and the Insignia Anglica from the late 16th C.), but it is doubtful that this will significantly change the results discussed.

³ Its full title is Großes Wappenbuch, enthaltend die Wappen der deutschen Kaiser, der europäischen Königs- und Fürstenhäuser, der Päpste und Kardinäle, Bischöfe und Äbte bis zu den lebenden Repräsentanten zur Zeit der Regentschaft Kaiser Rudolfs II. und Papst Gregors XIII
the rate increases to greater than 97%. Additionally, in all of the books, there exist blank shields for future entries – most complete with helm and mantling. These blanks clearly leave space for crests to be drawn in as well, in cases going so far as to leave part of the outline of the top of the helm off to make integration of the crest possible. The Manesse Codex is excluded from the above count because several panels illustrate combat scenes, which makes it difficult to determine which figures are armigers of importance and which are generic opponents over which they can be triumphant.

B. The Helm

The invention of the full-faced helm presaged the development of Arms, and with it the crest and then the full Achievement. Indeed, in the words of Fox-Davies [10]:

“It was not until the introduction of the crest that anyone thought of depicting a helmet with a shield.” (p. 316)

It seems fairly apparent, then, that without a helm one cannot have an Achievement. Dennys [19], though writing in the late 20th Century, says as much:

“One may be entitled to arms alone, and this is by no means uncommon, but one cannot have a crest, supporters, or badge without arms.” (p. 3)

The exact manner of the helm depicted varied with the fashion of the time, though until very late in the SCA period the helm depicted was the one commonly used in the Tournament (most commonly the joust). The very earliest helms in achievements were early forms of the great helm, and were then followed by the great helm itself, then the frogmouth jousting helm, and then the armet. Towards the end of the period, as the helm as a military implement was on the wane and tourneying with batons was prominent, the barred tournament helm became the standard depiction and has remained so to this day.

In modern heraldry, the orientation and depiction of the helm has meaning; specifically, it indicates the rank of the armiger. This was notably not the medieval practice. The following quotation from Fox-Davies [10] perfectly summarizes this sentiment:

“Since one's earliest lessons in the rules of heraldry, we have been thought, as one of the fundamental laws of the achievement, that the helmet by its shape and position was indicative of rank; and we early learnt by rote that the esquire's helmet was of steel, and was placed in profile, with the visor closed: that the helmet of the knight and baronet was to be open and affronté; that the helmet of the peer must be of silver, guarded by grilles and placed in profile; and that the royal helmet was of gold, with grilles, and affronté. [...] These regulations, like some other adjuncts of heraldic art, are comparatively speaking of modern origin. Heraldry in its earlier and better days knew them not, and they came into vogue about the Stuart times, when heraldic art was distinctly on the wane.” (p. 303)

It is not coincidental that at the point when knights ceased to bear helms in battle that these rules first began to appear [10]:

“...at the end of the sixteenth and the beginning of the seventeenth centuries, when the helmet was being fast relegated to ceremonial usage and pictorial emblazonment, ingenious heralds began to evolve the system by which rank and degree were indicated by the helmet.” (p. 317)

This is affirmed by inspection of the helmets in the eight Wappenbücher analyzed prior. While a variety of helmet shapes and ornamentations exist, there seem to be no discernible rules regarding their use. Some Arms (especially royal and civic armory) appear in several Wappenbücher, and the helm used is not consistent across the Wappenbücher (even amongst ones created at approximately the same time). More grand portrayals of Arms, especially royal and noble Arms, show a trend towards more grand helm depictions (affronty orientation, visor open, gold coloring, more elaborate helms, etc.), but this is by no means universal.

Instead, what is consistent across the Wappenbücher is that the helms depicted inside a single book tend to be similar: mostly frogmouth, mostly barred, style of barred helm, etc. Most, but not all, helms face to sinister, and fairly few face affronty. There is even artistic variation of orientation inside a given Wappenbuch. For example, for most of BSB Cod.icon. 392 d, Arms on the right-hand-side of the page face to sinister and those on the left-hand-
side face to dexter. Some Arms have two helms over them, with their own crest and mantling colors over each (perhaps representing a marriage) – in this case, the two helms always face each other over the center of the shield. A helm facing affronty does seem to be something of an indication of rank in many of the Wappenbücher, however even known royal Arms are not always depicted so, and some non-royal Arms are. Helm color is not even standard. In some rolls, gold coloration does seem to be reserved for nobility (Lords and Barons) and above, but for the most part helms are depicted silver or not colored at all, and in some cases even those known *not* to be royal or noble are colored gold.

Neubecker [20] states that these barred helms were restricted in the Holy Roman Empire, but does not state when this went into effect:

“The use of this barred helmet was restricted by the imperial chancellory to the nobility as upholders of the tradition of tourneying. This privilege was also shared by certain people who enjoyed the same standing as the nobility, for example those who had a doctor’s title in law or theology.” (p.161)

However, the Rolls of Arms analyzed above do not bear this statement out. Helm types (though not facings) are almost completely uniform through a Roll, regardless of rank or presence of crest. Additionally, tournaments (chiefly jousts), were still being held at the end of the SCA period – they continued in England until the middle of the 17th Century, and in Germany well into the 16th. This, then, is likely a post-period edict.

Therefore, it seems that for the most part in the SCA heraldic period, helms were then left up to artistic license. The exact depiction of the helm: style, orientation, color, etc. was largely if not completely unregulated and was a function of the artist drawing the Arms or the Arms blanks.

C. Torse & Mantling

Mantling is stylized decorative cloth which descends from the top of the helm, looping around decoratively to the sides. Given that the closed-faced helm evolved either in parallel with or as a result of the First Crusade [3], and that steel helms get very hot under the sun, it is not a stretch to imagine that heraldic mantling draws its inspiration from fabric used to keep direct sun off of crusaders’ helms. The torse is a twisted “rope” of two strands of fabric likely used originally to keep the drape (mantling) secure atop the helm or hide its seams, or given as a token from a lady before the joust [19].

Mantling is only seen with Arms with helms. The two most prominent instances of this are the women bearing their Arms on a lozenge and the clergy – as neither bear helms, they do not have mantling. Instead, strands of ribbon and either tasseled ropes or wafting stoles serve the same decorative purpose.

In some early armorials (the Manesse Codex being an excellent example), not every helm has a separate mantling, but many have crests that descend down the back of the helm that may serve the same purpose (or be crests blending into cloth mantling). Those that do only show the outside of the mantling (in a single tincture), which does not necessarily match the primary tincture of the Arms. Later, the mantling spread out and became increasingly ornamental. The Scheibler'sches
Wappenbuch is particularly interesting from this respect: all 476 pages in its older section contain unique, hand-drawn mantling in a variety of styles. Two examples can be seen in Figures 4 and 5 to the right, as well as Figure 3 above.

As the ornamentation of the mantling increased (and with it the number of twists) it became necessary to tincture the lining as well as the outer. A pattern common across all jurisdictions rapidly arose: the mantling is always colored in the primary color and primary metal of the Arms. For this purpose, ermine and its family count as their base tincture (ermine and erminois as metals and counter-ermine and pean as colors). The author has not noted any instances of vair in mantling.

The torse is uncommon in German armorials, with the mantling draping over top of the helm instead. It is, however, extremely common in English armorials and remains so today. If the Arms feature a coronet, it generally replaces the torse, but occasionally stands atop it.

It is also worth noting the words of von Volborth [21]:

"It is considered bad heraldry if a crested helm is displayed without mantling, or if a shield without helm is displayed without lambrequins [mantling]." (p. 61)

These points are completely in line with what has been previously discussed: a crested helm without mantling is naked, and mantling requires a helm and such cannot appear on its own.

D. Supporters

Other aspects of Achievements are more difficult to see in Wappenbücher, as armory is almost never depicted with supporters or a motto. However, supporters are addressed in detail by Fox-Davies [10]. Concerning modern English heraldic law:

"In England the right to bear supporters is confined to those to whom they have been granted or recorded, but such grant is very rigidly confined to peers, to Knights of the Garter, Thistle, and St. Patrick, and to Knights Grand Cross and Knights Grand Commanders (as the case may be) of other Orders. [...] Baronets of England, Ireland, Great Britain, and the United Kingdom as such are not entitled to claim grants of supporters..." (p. 419)

Dennys [19] confirms this:

"Knights of the Garter and of the Thistle, and Knights and Dames Grand Cross of the other Orders of Chivalry are entitled to supporters to their arms." (p. 177)

Additionally, he earlier makes note of the unusual circumstance of Captain John Hanning Speke, who after discovering the source of the Nile was granted both an honorable augmentation to his Arms and supporters, both commemorating that fact:

"The interesting point about this last grant is that it is one of the very few occasions on which supporters have been granted as an honorable augmentation to one who was not a peer, K.G., or the like. There seems much to be said for reviving this practice. " (p. 55)

Dennys does not discuss historical practice concerning Augmentations. However, Fox-Davies does:

"In this country a somewhat fictitious importance has become attached to supporters, owing to their almost exclusive reservation to the highest rank. The rules which hold at the moment will be recited presently, but there can be no doubt that originally they were in this country little more than decorative and artistic appendages, being devised and altered from time to time by different artists as the artistic necessities of the moment demanded." (p. 407)

Woodward and Burnett [22], also quoted in detail by Fox-Davies, goes into more detail:

"There is really little doubt now that Anstis was quite correct when in his Aspilogia he attributed the origin of supporters to the invention of the engraver, who filled up the spaces at the top and sides of the triangular shield upon a circular seal with foliage, or with fanciful animals. Any good collection of mediæval seals will strengthen this conviction." (p. 628)

They then cite numerous examples from the 13th and 14th centuries, dating as early as 1275, and continue:

"But though this abhorrence of a vacuum originated the use of animals, etc., as quasi supporters, other causes certainly co-operated. Allusion has been made to the usage by which on vesica-
shaped seals ladies of high rank are represented as supporting with either hand shields of arms. From this probably arose the use of a single supporter. [...] Probably that which contributed most to the general adoption of a single supporter was the use by the German Emperor of the eagle displayed, bearing on its breast his personal arms, a fashion early adopted by his kinsmen and feudatories.” (p. 629-630)

Speaking to the popularity of this manner of display, they say:

“Single supporters were very much in favour in the 13th and 14th centuries and the examples are numerous.” (p. 632)

They cite many examples of Arms displayed on an animal’s breast or supported by a single supporter. In particular, cited as appearing as a single supporter are many human figures, a swan, many helmed lions, a brown dog helmed and crested, a dolphin, a unicorn, an angel, and lions without helms, all from before 1430. Many other instances are cited but not detailed.

While double supporters became the most common form of display, the use of a single supporter occurred concurrently with the use of two:

“The use of double supporters, as at present, arose contemporaneously with that of the single one. In the majority of cases both supporters were alike, but even at an early date this was by no means invariably the case. In Brittany supporters were usually different, and there is a frequent combination of the lion and the griffin” (p. 633)

Several examples are subsequently cited, notably including many examples of unrelated persons bearing the same supporters. Paired lions appeared to be common, in addition to the lion-and-griffin combination from Brittany previously mentioned. Additional examples of supporters include eagles, angels, unicorns, wild men, dragons, greyhounds, swans, porcupines, and salamanders. Of particular note is that not all of the persons cited as bearing supporters are peers.

There seems no reason to doubt Woodward and Burnett’s conclusions. Several other authors make the same statement, including von Vollborth [21] and Neubecker [3]. Harvey and McGuinness’ A Guide to British Medieval Seals [23], a work devoted exclusively to this material, confirms the origin – they note that by the first two decades of the 13th Century, on heraldic shields:

“...the blank space around the shield was beginning to attract ornamentation – flowering tendrils, a crouching lion or wyvern on each side, or a cusped outline with further ornament in the spandrels.”

Additionally, a common motif in these seals (predating the above-cited examples, and dying out by ca. 1300) is a rider with a shield, in which the horseman is essentially serving as his own supporter. Harvey and McGuinness show several seals with ornamentation that strongly resembles the traditional Achievement as we know it.

Neubecker [3] and von Vollburth [21] give many images of supporters, singly and paired. It is worth noting that the single supporters do not commonly appear in the same manner as do paired supporters (one off to each side – though this does appear). Instead, they appear in a variety of other manners: around a stag’s neck on a strap, supported by human figures while resting on the ground or carried (von Vollburth cites instances of women appearing as supporters, carrying or holding up their husbands’ or fathers’ Arms). In sculpture, stained-glass windows, woodcuts, and etchings, various human, angelic, and monster figures appear as single supporters. A particular Germanic trend is to have Arms borne on the breast of an eagle, as seen in Figure 6.

Several historical rolls of arms have examples of Arms with either single or double supporters, some of which are:
• BSB Cod.icon 291 – *Insignia Anglica* (Middle 16th C) [24]
• BSB Cod.icon. 313 – Jakob Streit’s *Stammbuch* (1560-1615) [25]
• BSB Cod.icon. 320 – *Stammbuch des Hans Lorenz von Trautskirchen und des Hans Jörg von Elrichshausen* (1575 - 1615) [26]
• BSB Cod.icon. 333 – *Großes Wappenbuch* (1583 - 1700) [16]
• BSB Cod.icon. 390 – *Wappenbuch des Heiligen Römischen Reiches* (1554 - 1568) [17]
• BSB Cod.icon. 391 – *Sammelband mehrerer Wappenbücher* (ca. 1530) [27]
• BSB Cod.icon. 392 d – *Wappenbuch* (1st H, 16th C) [18]

Only the first of these illustrates supporters (all are paired) in any sort of organized or regular manner, the remaining all give supporter(s) for a few Arms (though some have more than others) and not as a part of a regular grid as in the *Insignia Anglica*.

![Figure 7. Achievement of Ferdinand I, Holy Roman Emperor.](image)


Supporters seem to have been almost exclusively animate objects: von Vollburth [21] claims instances of trees as supporters, with the Arms hanging from a limb, but Dennys [19] is emphatic that these are simply instances of artistic ornamentation and does not constitute a supporter. There is at least one instance of a shield having pillars to each side where the supporters normally stand, but it is doubtful that these constitute supporters in the normal sense; they do not touch the shield, and have ribbons bearing a motto (PLVS VLTRA) entwined around them. The device in question is that of Charles V, Holy Roman Emperor, and the pillars are crowned with the Imperial crown. It is probable that this is a special case, with the pillars representing the Pillars of Hercules in his capacity as King of Spain. Figure 7 gives a more conventional Achievement, this one for Ferdinand I, Charles’ successor as Holy Roman Emperor.

Neubecker [3] ties the use of the compartment to the use of the Achievement on seals – in particular, the removal therefrom:

“Once the restricting frame of the seal was removed from the representation of the human figure, the supporter could be placed on the ground, which was only restricted by the space available. The solution then offered itself, governed not by heraldic but by ornamental considerations, of placing the supporters on a architecturally constructed pedestal, called a compartment. In blazons such compartments are usually mentioned but not described, their design being left to the imagination of the heraldic artist. In periods over overflowing artistic forms, such as the Renaissance, baroque, and rococo, an often excessive use was made of the possibilities provided
by this freedom. This was particularly true of situations in which heraldry was only one component of the whole, such as tombs, title pages of books, and bookplates. “ (p. 202)

Compartments traditionally take the form of small grassy knolls in English armory, but if the supporters are aquatic (dolphins, mermaids, etc.) or aerial (such as angels and seraphim), then water or clouds can be used. Additionally, in the absence of a compartment proper, the supporters can stand on the motto scroll (indeed, there are instances of motto scrolls taking the form of plaques so as to provide a more firm base on which the supporters may stand).

There appears then to be ample evidence for the historical use of single and double supporters in the SCA period, across the breadth of Europe. Also significantly, display of both single and double supporters is shown as not being exclusively restricted to peers. While in England this is traditionally (and modernly) the case, it is not so in Continental Europe and there appears to be no restriction at all on the use of a single animal or figure as a supporter.

E. Mottoes

According to Fox-Davies, the treatment of mottoes in modern Arms varies widely by jurisdiction. However, it is pointed out that mottoes are essentially unregulated by heraldry in England: they are considered uninherited (i.e. associated with a single person, though generations of a family may bear the same motto), and only recorded and displayed if the armiger desires. He traces the origin of the motto back to the badge (see Figure 6 for an excellent example):

"Many of these badges are found in conjunction with words, mottoes and phrases, and as the distinction between the badge in general and the crest in general became less apparent, they eventually in practice became interchangeable devices, if the same device did not happen to be used for both purposes. Consequently the motto from the badge became attached to the crest, and was thence transferred to its present connection with the coat of arms. Just as at the present time a man may and often does adopt a maim upon which he will model his life, some pithy proverb, or some trite observation, without any question of reference to armorial bearings–so, in the old days, when learning was less diffuse and when proverbs and sayings had a wider acceptance and vogue than at present, did many families and many men adopt for their use some form of words. “ (p. 450)

As well, recall his earlier description of “base” armorial bearings, quoted in full in section A (Crests):

“…and it will usually be fund that the armorial bearings of an ordinary commoner consist of shield, crest, and motto. […] The motto is usually to be found but is not a necessity…” (p. 58)

Additionally, no readily identifiable mottoes exist in any of the eight Wappenbücher analyzed earlier, except where mentioned.

These facts give good cause to believe that mottoes in the heraldic period encompassed by the SCA were in large part unregulated. However, as some of these mottoes are known today, there is justification that they were on occasion monitored and recorded.

IV. Achievements in the SCA

As indicated earlier, fourteen kingdoms regulate by law or custom the components of Arms. Those fourteen kingdoms are:

- An Tir
- Ansteorra
- Artemesia
- Atenveldt
- Atlantis
- Caid
- Calontir
- Ealdormere
- Gleann Abhann
- Meridies
- the Middle
- Outlands
- Trimaris
- the West
The remaining five do not:

- Æthelmarc
- Drachenwald
- the East
- Lochac
- Northshield

These regulations create a form of heraldic recognition for advancement in the SCA, independent of the titles and regalia already granted by Society law. However, attempting to match the SCA’s award structure to a patchwork of modern and historical real-world customs leads to a large diversity in Kingdom regulations. Table 2 illustrates this visually, showing the earliest award level at which each component of an Achievement is granted. The key for Table 2 is given immediately below it in Table 3.

Table 2. Components of Achievements by Earliest Award Level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kingdom</th>
<th>Helm</th>
<th>Tors &amp; Mantling</th>
<th>Crest</th>
<th>Supporters</th>
<th>Motto</th>
<th>Compartment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Æthelmarc</td>
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<td>An Tir</td>
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<td>Ansteorra</td>
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<td>Artemesia</td>
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<td>Atenveldt</td>
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<td>Atlantia</td>
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<td>Calontir</td>
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<td>Drachenwald</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ealdormere</td>
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<td>East</td>
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<td>Gleann Abhann</td>
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<td>Lochac</td>
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<td>Meridies</td>
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<td>Middle</td>
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<td>Northshield</td>
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<td>Outlands</td>
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<td>Trimarisi</td>
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<td>West</td>
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</table>

Table 3. Key for Table 2

- Not Stated
- Anyone (Not regulated)
- Registered Arms
- Award of Arms
- Grant of Arms
- Patent of Arms (Peers)
- Nobility (Court Barony & Royal Peers)
- Nobility (Royal Peers)

Even as disparate as the regulations are, a few commonalities can be seen. In general, amongst kingdoms which regulate Achievements:

- Supporters are granted to Peers (single) or Royal Peers (double).
- Crests are granted to Peers or holders of Grants of Arms.
- Helms, torses and mantling are allowed for those who have received an Award of Arms.
- Mottos and compartments are allowed for anyone.

Some kingdoms have particularly odd regulations:

- Ansteorra restricts mottos to peers, which does not include Nobility (either Court Baronies or Royal Peers).
- Meridies restricts a helm to those who have a Grant of Arms and above, but allows mantling for anyone with an Award of Arms, which is in direct contradiction with all known practices of period heraldry.
- The Outlands explicitly forbids mottos on Achievements in award scrolls.
• Atenveldt allows a helm and supporters to anyone with an Award of Arms, but requires a Grant of Arms to have a torse and mantling.

Additionally, some kingdoms’ regulations directly mirror those of other kingdoms:

• Ealdormere’s traditions (they have only one regulation, that recipients of Ealdormerean Grants of Arms may bear as a crest the Crest of Ealdormere) are exactly the same as those of the Midrealm (excepting those concerning the use of dragon supporters). This is almost certainly a leftover from Ealdormere’s days as a principality of the Middle

• Glean Abhann’s laws are taken verbatim from Trimaris’ – they are even in exactly the place in their Kingdom laws and are hosted in the same place on the kingdom websites. This is interesting, because there is no immediately apparent connection between the two kingdoms. They are both former principalities of Meridies, but Meridies’ laws bear very little recognition to theirs.

The regulations are also enumerated in several different locations, making finding those for a particular kingdom rather difficult. The most common locations are the Kingdom Scribes’ Handbook (7, with an additional one appearing on the Scribes’ website) and the Kingdom Heralds’ website (4). Table 4 shows where the Achievements of Arms can be found for each kingdom.

The high incidence of Scribal handbooks is initially surprising, but less so when one realizes that one of the most common uses of Achievements in the SCA is to personalize and decorate award scrolls. In fact, some kingdoms even require this practice (the Outlands, for example).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Kingdom</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Seneschal’s Page</td>
<td>Calontir (Kingdom Law)</td>
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<td>Gleann Abhann (Heraldic Law)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Trimaris (Kingdom Law)</td>
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<td>Kingdom Heralds’ Website</td>
<td>An Tir</td>
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<td>Ansteorra</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Atenveldt</td>
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<td>Lochac</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pursuivant’s Handbook</td>
<td>Middle</td>
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<tr>
<td>Scribes’ Handbook</td>
<td>Æthelmarc</td>
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<td>Artemesia</td>
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<td>Atlantia</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Ealdormere</td>
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<td>Meridies</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Outlands</td>
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<td></td>
<td>West</td>
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<tr>
<td>Scribes’ Website</td>
<td>Caid</td>
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</table>

Drachenwald, the East, and Northshield do not explicitly state their regulations anywhere. Both Drachenwald and the East have no sumptuary laws over those explicitly proscribed by the Society (though only Drachenwald states as much on the Kingdom website), and this extends to Achievements of Arms. Northshield has neither law nor custom governing any components of Achievements, but this fact is not enumerated on its website. It is worth noting that only Ansteorra registers the Achievements borne by its citizens. A full compilation of all Achievements of Arms regulations is given in Appendix I.

V. Commentary

If encouraging more display of good heraldry is a practice to be desired, it is not a stretch to conclude that restricting the bearing of Achievements, especially very late in a person’s SCA career, is to be discouraged. However, with five exceptions, such regulations are in place anyway. Therefore, we can attempt to analyze what historical practices were and attempt to determine a set of regulations which provide both heraldic recognition for SCA achievement, and still allow display of Achievements by as many persons who are so inclined.
One cannot have an Achievement without a helm, and helms without mantling are naked. Thus, this should be allowed by anyone who has a registered device. This could provide an additional benefit to registering one’s Arms. There is no reason why mantling should appear with no helm, such is never done in period practice.

Several kingdoms restrict crests to peers, and most of the rest restrict them to those with Grants of Arms. This likely stems from the modern British terminology of awarding Arms: “Grants of Arms by Letters Patent”. However, the awards Arms with an Award of Arms, and Grants and Patents are separate award levels. However, with almost vanishingly rare exceptions, Arms in period rolls include come with crests. This is supported by a variety of other historical evidence stating that all armigers would also have a crest to bear with their Arms – there would be no such thing as a person who had been granted “the Right and Dignity of Arms” (to borrow the Ansteorran scroll text) who was not entitled to display something on atop helm as well. Thus, persons with Awards of Arms should be allowed to bear crests. This would provide an additional benefit as well: participants in crest tournaments could bear their own personal crest, increasing their visibility and engaging everyone in some of the other aspects of heraldry.

In modern England, supporters (always paired), are restricted to Peers of the realm. However, in period there seemed to be no hard-and-fast rules on paired supporters, and there are innumerable examples of single supporters in both period rolls of Arms and many different forms of artwork. Therefore, there seems no reason to restrict paired supporters to anything of higher rank than Peers of the Society (not just Royal Peers), and to allow single supporters to holders of Grants of Arms. Compartments, intended as they are to provide a supporter a place to stand, should be allowed whenever supporters are granted.

There is no restriction whatsoever in any kingdom of the SCA on choosing a personal motto, and restricting the display of a person’s personal motto on an Achievement simply because they have not achieved a certain rank seems to be a preposterous and futile endeavor. Helms, too, seem to be largely a matter of artistic license, especially in regards to their facing. Helm colors did appear to occasionally be used as an indicator of rank, so if Kingdoms wish to restrict helm color by rank this is not objectionable. However, the type of helm and its facing should be left to the preference of the artist.

It is believed (by the author, if no-one else), that restricting the display of Achievements by rank serves only to discourage the display of Achievements by those who very much want to do so, but have not yet earned the right to. While the most common means of display of Achievements is on scrolls (awards scrolls for the Kingdoms which do so, and commissioned Achievements scrolls for those who do not), there are many other mediums for display of Achievements. For those who are so inclined, liberalizing these regulations (particularly concerning crests), will enable them to display more good heraldry – a practice which is much to be commended. For those who are not inclined to display an Achievement, regardless of how many awards they have received, any loosening of regulations will not affect them at all.

Acknowledgements

This paper evolved out of a proposal to change the Achievements of Arms regulations in Ansteorra, which fostered an interest in the history and inter-kingdom anthropology of Achievements. Many persons encouraged both the original proposal and the paper it became, and the author would like to thank the following persons for their assistance and support: Andrew Bawldwyn, Star Principal Herald, for encouraging my interest in Achievements and hinting pointedly that it would make an good topic for a paper; Sir Alejandro Ramirez Mendoza, Baron of Elfsea, for encouraging me to “volunteer” as Nautilus Pursuivant even before I had even moved to Ansteorra, for his vocal support of my initial proposal, and for his invaluable assistance and advice on how to navigate the politics and traditions of Ansteorra; Tanczos Istvan, Non Scripta Herald, for answering my innumerable and interrupting questions; and my Warder, Baroness Brighid MacCumhal, for her unceasing pride and support, regardless of how terrible a Cadet I may be now or have been in the past.

References


[9] Scheibler'sches Wappenbuch, BSB Cod.icon. 312 c, Bayerische StaatsBibliothek. Digitized by the Münchener DigitalisierungsZentrum, Digitale Bibliothek.


[27] Sammelband mehrerer Wappenbücher, BSB Cod.icon. 391, ca. 1530, Bayerische StaatsBibliothek. Digitized by the Münchener DigitalisierungsZentrum, Digitale Bibliothek.

## Appendix I. Achievements of Arms Regulations of the Known World

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kingdom</th>
<th>Guidelines Published</th>
<th>Register?</th>
<th>Anyone</th>
<th>Registered Arms</th>
<th>Aoa</th>
<th>GoA</th>
<th>PoA</th>
<th>Nobility</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Æthelmarc</td>
<td>Scribes' Handbook</td>
<td>No</td>
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<td>Scribes' Handbook</td>
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<td>GoA</td>
<td>PoA</td>
<td>Nobility</td>
<td>Other</td>
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<tr>
<td>Atlantis</td>
<td>Scribes' Handbook</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>May display badges of awards pendant from ribbon below shield</td>
<td>Aoa</td>
<td>GoA</td>
<td>PoA</td>
<td>Nobility</td>
<td>Other</td>
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<tr>
<td>Caid</td>
<td>Scribes' Website</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
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### Notes
- Countess/Duchess may have wreaths of hearts or hearts and roses circling the shield (County: red, Duchy: gold), or ribbon bearing the wreath of roses/hearts as a pendant badge.
- Mantling including a semy of mullets of five greater and five lesser points is reserved to past crowns of Ansteorra.
- Mantling consisting of any tincture with a semy of roses is reserved to members of the Order of the Rose. A banner consisting of the kingdom ensign followed by the badge or symbol of a greater office shall be reserved to current and past Greater Officers of State. Any crest, supporters, or mantling that would be considered presumptuous of another SCA or historical kingdom will be registered only with consultation/consent of the principal herald of the kingdom in question.
- Some insignia are reserved to certain Orders or ranks. Examples are white belts or baldrics for the Chivalry, laurel wreaths for the Order of the Laurel, the chapeau (cap of maintenance) for the Order of the Pelican, wreaths of roses for past queens, chaplets of roses for past princesses, etc.
- Any crest, supporters, or mantling that would be considered presumptuous of another SCA or historical kingdom will be registered only with consultation/consent of the principal herald of the kingdom in question.
- Countess/Duchess may have wreaths of hearts or hearts and roses circling the shield (County: red, Duchy: gold), or ribbon bearing the wreath of roses/hearts as a pendant badge.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>No Published</th>
<th>None</th>
<th>None</th>
<th>Steel helm, Tonce, Mantling, Crest</th>
<th>AoA = Single supporter, Compartment</th>
<th>Second Supporter: Holden of GoAs from Ealdormere may bear the Crest of Ealdormere.</th>
<th>Second supporter: Arms surrounded by symbol of their order. Knights: Gold chain. MoA: Budlony (after the fashion of the Scottish strap and buckle). Laurel: Laurel wreath. Pelican: Wreath of feathers charged with gostris de sang. Laurel may replace or ensign the torse with a laurel wreath. Pelicans may replace torse with chapels of any tincture.</th>
<th>Second supporter = Coronet. Royal peers may ornament helms with gold. Companions of the Order of the Rose may wear a surround their arms or replace the torse with a chaplet of roses.</th>
<th>Great Officers of State may bear a second supporter and their badge of office pendant from a ribbon or knight's chain encircling the shield, as appropriate. Territorial barons and Baronesse may display the Arms of his or her Barony on a banner maintained by one of the supporters. The Crest of Ealdormere is “A wolf passant argent collared and maintaining from a staff sublata a banner bearing &quot;Gules, three tellam flowers argent barbed and seeded vert&quot;.&quot; No-one else may bear this crest - the only official rule concerning achievements in Ealdormere.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>East</td>
<td>Not Published. The East Kingdom has no sumptuary laws over the Society minimums, and there are no rules governing achievements (private email from Ryan Brigantia).</td>
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<td>Glenn Ahbann</td>
<td>Heraldic Law of Glenn Ahbann, on the Seneschal's page.</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>There are no explicit guidelines for anything other than supporters (at the GoA level and above).</td>
<td>Single Supporter</td>
<td>Single Supporter</td>
<td>Court Barony: No explicit allowance, but bestows a Grant of Arms (single supporter). Royal Peers: Paired Supporters</td>
<td>Augmentations of Arms bestow a second supporter.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Lochac</td>
<td>LocHo/ Heraldic Policy § 8.2.7</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>&quot;Lochac does not regulate the usage of mottos, supporters, crests or other portions of a full heraldic achievement.&quot;</td>
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<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Mantling or ribbons, torse (NO HELM)</td>
<td>GoA = Helmet (any type, facing front), Crest, Compartment or Motto scroll. Chivalry: White belt or baldric may be depended from the motto scroll or encircling the shield; Knights may show a simple gold chain hanging from under the helm. Laurel: Laurel wreath replacing or surmounting the torse, rising above the helm, or encircling the shield. Pelican: Cap of maintenance may replace or surmount the Torse; Pelican or pelican in its piety may be used in the design.</td>
<td>Second supporter = Coronet. Royal peers may ornament helms with gold and bear a dragon crest. Companions of the Order of the Rose may wear a surround their arms or replace the torse with a chaplet of roses.</td>
<td>Great Officers of State may bear a second supporter and their badge of office pendant from a ribbon or knight's chain encircling the shield, as appropriate. Territorial barons and Baronesse may display the Arms of his or her Barony on a banner maintained by one of the supporters. The Crest of Ealdormere is &quot;A wolf passant argent collared and maintaining from a staff sublata a banner bearing &quot;Gules, three tellam flowers argent barbed and seeded vert&quot;.&quot; No-one else may bear this crest - the only official rule concerning achievements in Ealdormere.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>MK Pursuivants' Handbook p. 44-46</td>
<td>No (that display is &quot;strongly encouraged&quot;)</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Steel helm, Tonce, Mantling, Crest</td>
<td>Add single supporter, compartment</td>
<td>GoA = by virtue of service as a Great Officer of the state of the Midrealm may use a dragon supporter and/or a dragon crest.</td>
<td>Second supporter: Arms surrounded by symbol of their order. Knights: Gold chain. MoA: Budlony (after the fashion of the Scottish strap and buckle). Laurel: Laurel wreath. Pelican: Wreath of feathers charged with gostris de sang. Laurel may replace or ensign the torse with a laurel wreath. Pelicans may replace torse with chapels of any tincture.</td>
<td>Second supporter = Coronet. Royal peers may ornament helms with gold and bear a dragon crest. Companions of the Order of the Rose may wear a surround their arms or replace the torse with a chaplet of roses.</td>
<td>Great Officers of State may bear a second supporter and their badge of office pendant from a ribbon or knight's chain encircling the shield, as appropriate. Territorial barons and Baronesse may display the Arms of his or her Barony on a banner maintained by one of the supporters. The Crest of Ealdormere is &quot;A wolf passant argent collared and maintaining from a staff sublata a banner bearing &quot;Gules, three tellam flowers argent barbed and seeded vert&quot;.&quot; No-one else may bear this crest - the only official rule concerning achievements in Ealdormere.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Northshield</td>
<td>Not published. Northshield has neither law nor policy on Achievements of Arms (private email from Madi Polaris).</td>
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<td>Outlands</td>
<td>Scribes' Handbook</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Helm (black, any orientation), Tonce, Mantling (no ermine or related fur)</td>
<td>Helm (white), Tonce, Mantling (may use ermine, but not counter-ermine, erminois, or pears), Crest Supporters, compartment if desired. Appropriate badge of order may be used in the design: surrounding the shield (belt, laurel wreath, as crest (laurel wreath, pelican in its piety); in place of torse (cap of maintenance, laurel wreath), surmounting torse (laurel wreath).</td>
<td>Helm (gold), Tonce, Mantling (may use ermine family), appropriate coronet.</td>
<td>Rocs: May encircle shield with chaplet of roses or use in place of torse. White or silver stag or dove as crest or supporter restricted to Outlands/Royal Peers. Pelicans as crest or supporter restricted to Pelican. Mottos will not be used as part of achievement on scrolls.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kingdoms of Trimaris</td>
<td>Kingdoms Law of Trimaris</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>There are no explicit guidelines for anything other than supporters (at the GoA level and above).</td>
<td>Single Supporter</td>
<td>Single Supporter</td>
<td></td>
<td>Court Barony: No explicit allowance, but bestows a Grant of Arms (single supporter). Royal Peers: Paired Supporters</td>
<td>Augmentations of Arms bestow a second supporter.</td>
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<td>West</td>
<td>Scribes' Handbook</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Helm (silver, in profile), Tonce, Mantling (no ermine or eminence).</td>
<td>Helm (silver, hill face or in profile), Tonce, Mantling (or eminence allowed), Crest, Supporters. Appropriate badge of order may be used in the design: surrounding the shield, on/around helm or gorget (gold chain); as crest (pelican in its piety); in place of torse (cap of maintenance, laurel wreath).</td>
<td>Court Barony: As AoA. Royal Peers: PaA = Coronets (in place of torse). Viscountcy: coronet of five points (three whole, two half), County &amp; Duchy: As usual. Helm may be silver or gold.</td>
<td>Countesses/Duchesses may request rose wreath in place of helm and coronet.</td>
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