ENGLISH HERITAGE EDUCATION

HISTORICAL INFORMATION

DISCOVER THE STORY OF RICHMOND CASTLE

Below is a short history of Richmond Castle. Use this information to learn how the site has changed over time. You'll find the definitions of the key words in the Glossary.

NORMAN CONQUEST: ALAN RUFUS

William the Conqueror (r.1066–87) claimed victory at the Battle of Hastings in 1066. The Normans had conquered England and headed northwards to reassert control of the North, sometimes by dispossessing the Anglo-Saxon lords of their lands. By the 1070s, the Normans had control of Yorkshire (see Harrying of the North, on p.11), including Hindrelag, which was later known as Richmond.

When the Norman armies took control of lands, King William usually gave these lands and estates to his loyal knights. Their job was to protect the lands in the name of the king. In 1071, King William gave lands he had taken from the Anglo-Saxon Earl Edwin of Mercia to his ally, Alan Rufus (d.1093). The estate was known as an 'honour', a group of different properties that were all part of one estate. Richmond was at the centre of Alan's estate.

Alan Rufus

HARRYING OF THE NORTH

Although William had conquered England in 1066 and proclaimed himself king, many people objected to his rule. Rebellions happened all over the country, and some of the biggest were in the north of England. In 1069, William marched to York with his army to put down the rebellions through a terrible campaign of destruction of people and land. His armies laid waste to the countryside, burning the crops in farmers' storehouses, destroying people's homes and killing animals that people relied on for food. This destruction became known as the 'Harrying of the North'. Harrying was a typical military tactic for invading and suppressing rebellion in the 11th century – the rebels were taken hostage, deported, left starving or murdered, and their land was given to William's supporters. When Domesday Book was published in 1086, 60% of the land holdings in Yorkshire were described as 'waste', i.e. had been destroyed, abandoned or uncultivated. Much of this waste is thought to have been caused by the Harrying of the North. There were no more rebellions against Norman rule in the north of England and William had replaced many of the Anglo-Saxon landowners with Norman ones.

William the Conqueror.

11th CENTURY: THE FIRST CASTLE

Domesday Book, a list of many lands in England, and some in Wales, and who owned them, records that Alan Rufus probably built a castle on his lands. This was probably Richmond Castle, which Alan built as a place from which to manage his new estate and protect the area from raids. Many Norman nobles built castles all over the country for the same reason – castles were fortified homes for Norman lords, mainly for administration. In sensitive areas they were built for defence. They were also symbols of the power and wealth of the new Norman aristocracy.
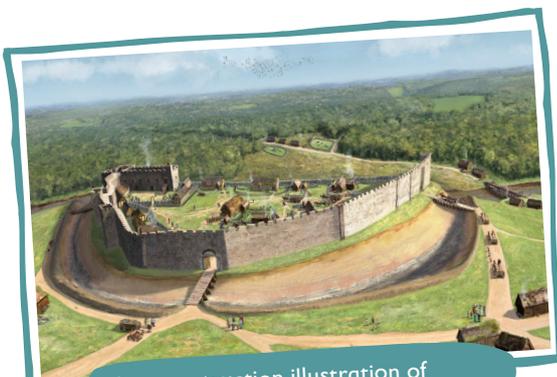
A reconstruction illustration of Richmond Castle in the 11th century.

The castle was built between 1071 and 1089. Like most Norman castles, it was built with a settlement attached. Castles needed many people to keep them running, so they needed somewhere to live. The castle and settlement were designed together as a walled enclosure, with a protective wall around both so the castle could protect the settlement from attackers, but also from thieves and wild animals, like wolves.

THE HONOUR OF RICHMOND

The honour that King William had granted to Alan Rufus was enormous, and he couldn't possibly have managed all the lands on his own. Alan gave some of the lands of his honour to his vassals, if they agreed to supply Alan with knights when he needed them, for example, to help protect Richmond Castle or if he went to war on behalf of the king. Each vassal took it in turns to supply knights to defend Richmond Castle for a fixed time period every year. These knights also took on other roles at the castle, such as the constable, chamberlain or steward.
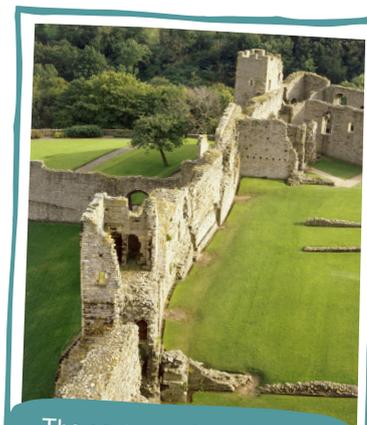
The east curtain wall. Vassals were responsible for protecting different sections of the castle's defences.

The vassals' responsibilities passed down through the next generations, creating a close network of families who were involved in maintaining and protecting the honour. They then built smaller castles and religious foundations (such as abbeys and priories) of their own.

12TH CENTURY: RICHMOND AND BRITTANY

Conan IV.

Richmond Castle and the estate passed down through Alan Rufus's brothers to his nephew, another Alan (c.1100–46), the first Earl of Richmond. Alan married Bertha of Brittany who was the heiress of Conan III, Duke of Brittany (d.1148), and Bertha and Alan's son became Conan IV (c.1135–71).

Conan IV controlled huge estates in both Brittany and at Richmond and was very wealthy. He spent a lot of time at Richmond in the 1150s and 1160s and was a generous patron of the abbeys and priories connected with the honour, including Easby Abbey. It is almost certain that Conan built the keep at Richmond Castle. The keep is just over 30 metres high and would have been an astonishing sight to medieval visitors. This great tower was a clear symbol of the strength, power and wealth of the owner of the castle, but it was not a defensive structure.

For Conan and his descendants, being both an earl in England and a duke in France provided huge wealth but meant that you had to be loyal to both kings. This would cause problems in the future when the kings fell out, and was very difficult when England and France went to war…

KING HENRY TAKES CONTROL

Conan married Margaret, the sister of Malcolm IV, King of Scotland, and their daughter, Constance (c.1161–1201), was heiress to Richmond. When Constance was just five years old, Conan agreed with King Henry II (r.1154–89) to **betroth** Constance to Henry's fourth son, Geoffrey, for which King Henry received control of Brittany.

When Conan died, Constance was just nine years old, so Richmond Castle passed into the hands of her future father-in-law, King Henry. During the 1170s and 1180s, Henry spent money on improving Richmond Castle, probably updating Scolland's Hall.

Constance, heiress to Richmond Castle.

Constance and Geoffrey had a son, Arthur (1187–1203). Geoffrey died before Arthur was born, so Richmond Castle and the honour passed to Constance, who managed the estates under the watchful eye of King Henry. When Constance died in 1201, Arthur was still a minor, so Richmond passed to her third husband, Guy of Thouars.

# KING JOHN ORDERS A MURDER

Roald and his garrison may have been imprisoned in the keep.

Before Richard I (r.1189–99) died, he had named four-year-old Arthur (his nephew) as **heir** to the throne. Richard's other brother, John (r.1199–1216), seized the throne and captured Arthur along with his sister, Eleanor. In 1203, Arthur was murdered, probably on the orders of King John, and Eleanor was kept a prisoner for the rest of her life. The next year, John took Richmond Castle and the honour from Guy of Thouars.

Roald, the constable at Richmond Castle, rebelled twice against King John's rule. At first he refused to pay the tax owed to the king, for which he was fined. Then in 1215, the entire north of England revolted against King John, including Richmond, and Roald lost his position as constable and he and his **garrison** were imprisoned in the castle for many months.

13TH CENTURY: THE CASTLE CHANGES HANDS

After Arthur's murder, his half-sister Alice (Guy of Thouars's daughter) inherited Richmond and the honour. When she died in 1221, her husband Peter I, Duke of Brittany ruled over Richmond but his control of the castle and the honour was continually challenged by the king of England. By the middle of the 13th century, the king had granted the estates to several of his royal favourites in turn.
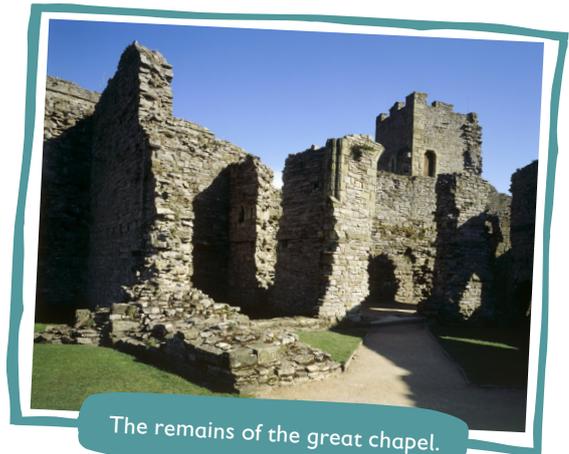
The remains of the great chapel.

King John died in 1216 and Henry III (r.1216–72) was crowned king of England. In 1266, Henry III gave Richmond Castle and the honour back to Peter I's son, John I, Duke of Brittany. The castle immediately passed to John's son, John II. In 1278, John came to an agreement with Egglestone Abbey to provide a community of chaplains for the great chapel in the castle.
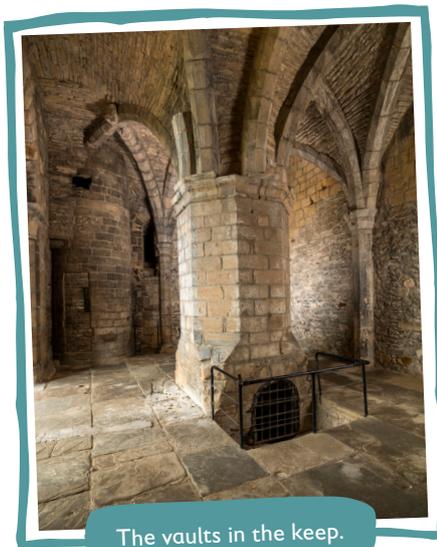
The vaults in the keep.

REPAIRS TO THE CASTLE AND BUILDING THE TOWN WALLS

In 1294, England went to war with France. John II, as Duke of Brittany, stayed loyal to the French king and so Edward I (r.1272–1307) seized Richmond Castle. Edward made repairs to the castle, including the vaults in the ground floor of the keep. The castle also held hostages from the war at this time.

Edward later invaded Scotland and John II's younger son, John of Brittany, helped his uncle Edward in the wars with Scotland. As a reward, in 1306, Edward gave him back the honour of Richmond. John probably built the walls that enclose the centre of Richmond town. Edward had granted him murage for Richmond, which earned John money to first build and then maintain the walls.

John's nephew inherited Richmond Castle. He died childless in 1341 and the castle passed to the Crown. The castle was by this time 'badly in need of repair' and Edward III (r.1327–77) granted it to his son, John of Gaunt. The castle passed back to the Dukes of Brittany one last time before finally returning to the English Crown under Henry IV (r.1399–1413).

TUDOR WARS AND RICHMOND, SURREY

In 1452, Henry VI (r.1422–61) appointed his half-brother Edmund Tudor as Earl of Richmond. During the struggles between English kings in the Wars of the Roses, the castle and estate passed to the Yorkists Duke of Gloucester and Duke of Clarence. Edmund's son, Henry Tudor, the leader of the Lancastrian cause, inherited the earldom from his father, but he was forced to live in exile in France. In 1485, he returned to England at the head of an army and defeated Yorkist Richard III (r.1483–85) at the Battle of Bosworth on 22 August 1485 and Henry took the throne as Henry VII (r.1485–1509). Richmond now belonged to the Crown's estate.

In 1497, Henry VII's palace at Sheen in Surrey, on the river Thames, burnt down. In 1498, Henry built a new large, grand palace in its place and called it Richmond Palace, in honour of the title Earl of Richmond he held before acceding to the throne.
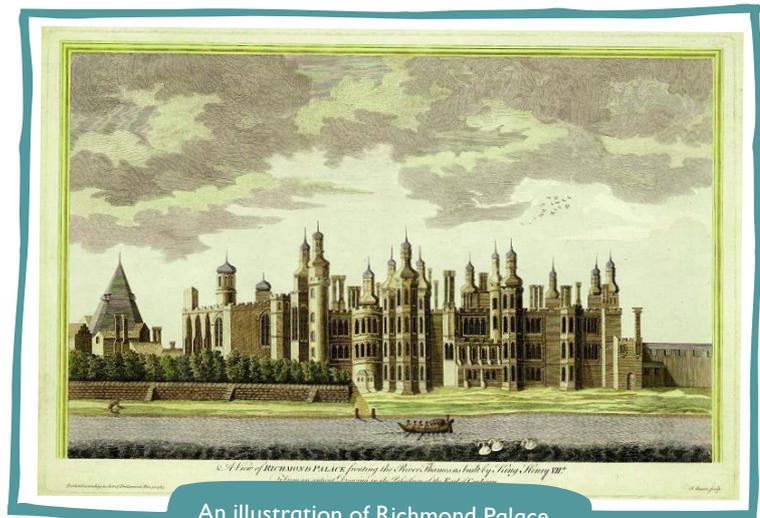
An illustration of Richmond Palace.

THE CASTLE BECOMES A RUIN

Although the name of Richmond and the earldom were seen as important, the castle was used very little from the late 15th century. In 1538, a report on the state of the castle for the king describes a long list of repairs needed and in 1540 it was described as 'in mere ruine'.

The castle was abandoned for the next 300 years, though the Chapel of St Nicholas may have continued to be used briefly. It is possible that some victims of the 1598 bubonic plague that hit Richmond were buried here.

By the 16th century, the castle was a ruin.

In 1675, Charles II (r.1660–85) made his **illegitimate** son Charles Lennox the Duke of Richmond, giving him ownership of the castle. His descendants still own the castle today.

Graffiti by prisoners in Richmond Cell Block.

VICTORIAN REVIVAL

In the 19th century, the castle was brought back to life as the headquarters for the North York Militia. To find out more about the later history of Richmond Castle, including the history of the Cell Block where conscientious objectors were imprisoned during the First World War, download our Richmond Cell Block Teachers' Kit on the **Richmond Castle Schools page**:

www.english-heritage.org.uk/visit/places/richmond-castle/schools

Since 1984, Richmond Castle and the Cell Block have been in the care of English Heritage.

SELF-LED ACTIVITY
JOIN THE HONOUR

KS3

Recommended for

KS3 (History, Art, English)

Learning objectives

- Develop knowledge of heraldic symbols and the functions of heraldry in medieval times.

- Understand the feudal system, the granting of lands by a Norman lord in return for protection by knights, and their role in the defence of a castle.

Time to complete

60 minutes (plus 60 minutes at the castle)

The modern Richmond coat of arms.

SUMMARY

This activity will help students understand the meanings behind heraldic shields and symbols, and some of the ways heraldic identity was important in medieval times.

Introduce your group to the concept of vassal knights in the Historical Information section in this kit on **pages 10–16**. Show them the image on **p.28** of the Register of the Honour of Richmond showing the banners of vassal knights above sections of the castle's defences.

From the 12th century, aristocratic families began to distinguish themselves from each other through the creation of badges or logos. Over time these became heraldic devices, for example a coat of arms on a shield, a banner or a motto.

Heraldry, worn on the clothes of men, women, children and servants, became like a brand or team name representing a particular family.

Students can use the activity sheets on **pages 29–31** to create their own heraldic banner or coat of arms. Use our **beginner's online guide** for more images and ideas:
www.english-heritage.org.uk/guide-to-heraldry

Once the students have designed their heraldic devices, they can create a shield or banner for displaying them. Show your class our **short video tutorial** (1 min 54 secs) to guide them through making a shield:
www.english-heritage.org.uk/cardboard-shield

MORE LEARNING IDEAS

Bring your coat of arms on your visit to Richmond Castle. Students could choose an area of the castle that they would like to protect and pose proudly with their banner or shield for a photo. Why not use the photos to create your own honour of Richmond display back in the classroom? Or create an honour for your school?

Don't forget to share your designs with us on Twitter @EHEducation.
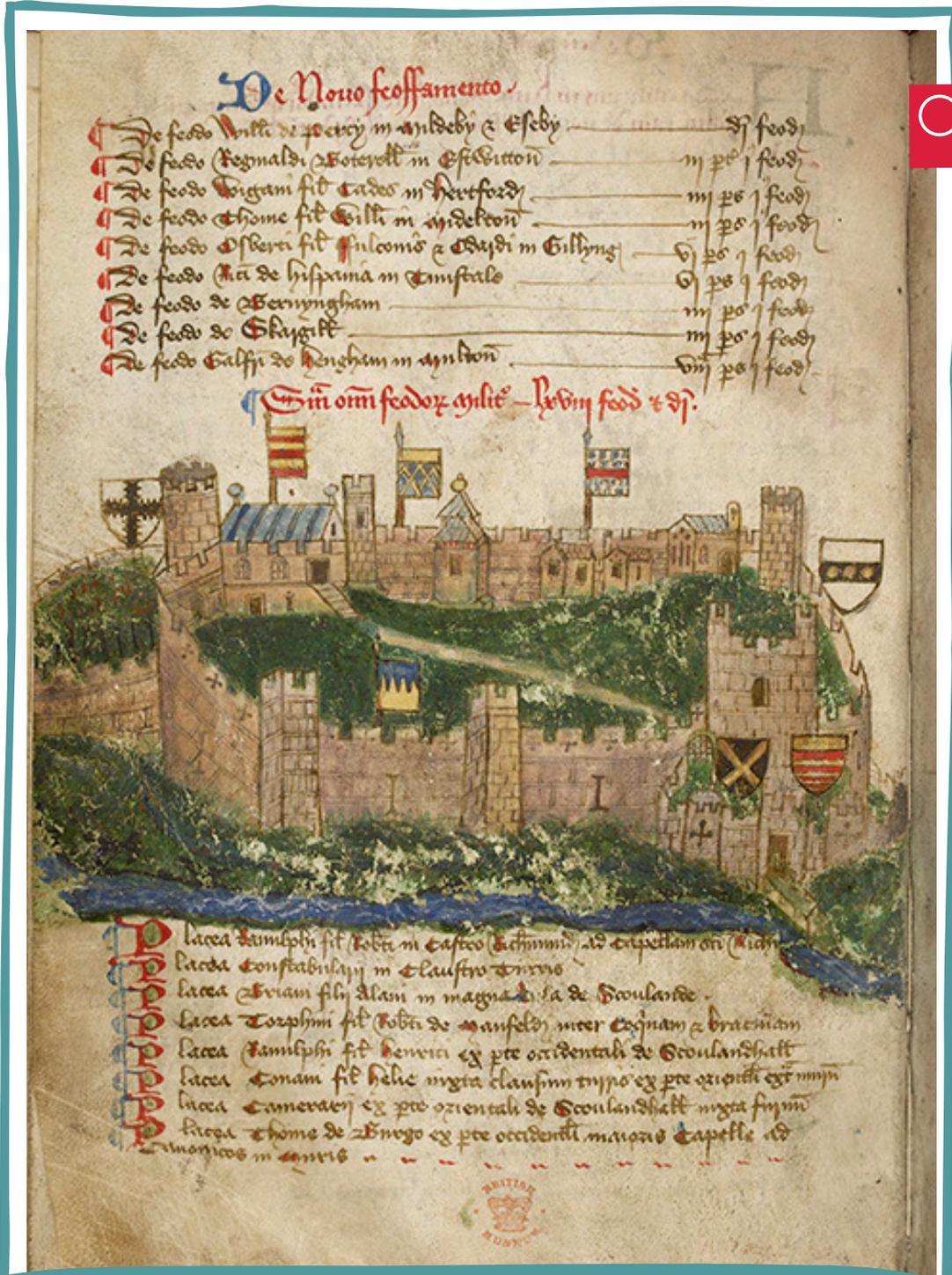
An illustration of Richmond Castle in the late 12th–13th centuries, showing the banner and coat of arms of each vassal knight above the section of the castle that they were responsible for protecting. From the Register of the Honour of Richmond, c.1400. © British Library Cotton Faustina BVII ff.85v.
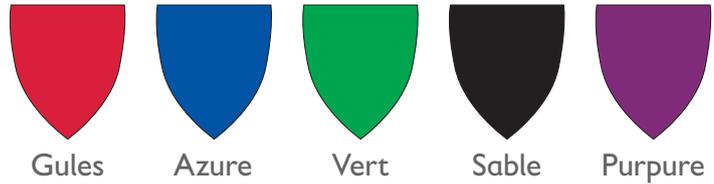
MAKE YOUR OWN COAT OF ARMS

Create a coat of arms that represents you. Follow these heraldic rules:
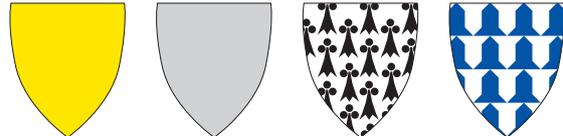
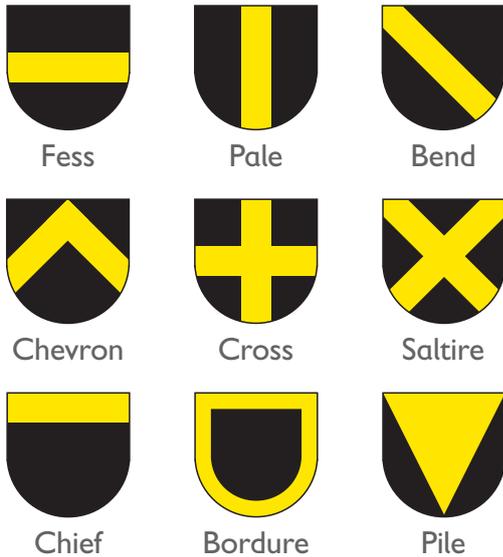## 1 BACKGROUND

The first step in making your coat of arms.

Gules Azure Vert Sable Purpure

Or (Gold) Argent (Silver) Ermine (Furs) Vair

2 ORDINARY

A simple shape that goes over the top of your background.

Fess Pale Bend

Chevron Cross Saltire

Chief Bordure Pile

HINT

Use our online **Beginner's Guide to Heraldry** to help you:

www.english-heritage.org.uk/guide-to-heraldry

3 CHARGE

Emblems that can go anywhere on your coat of arms.
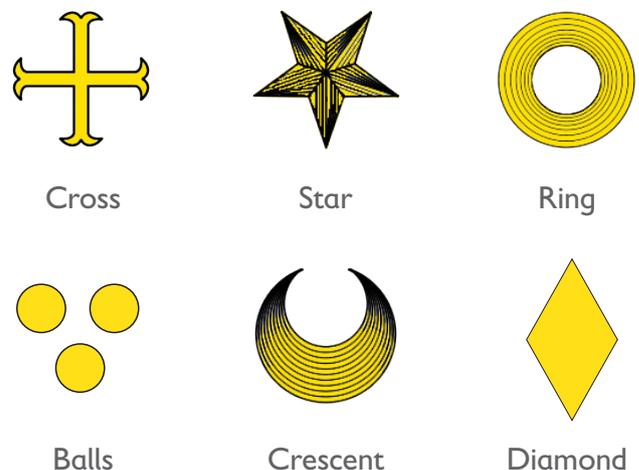
Cross Star Ring
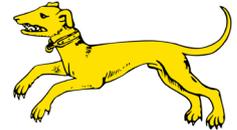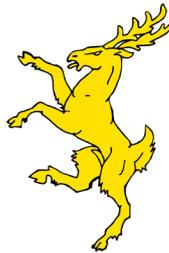
Balls Crescent Diamond

4 ANIMAL

You could use an animal as your charge. Choose one of these, or pick your own.
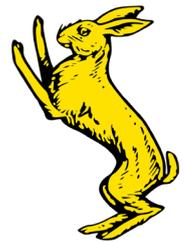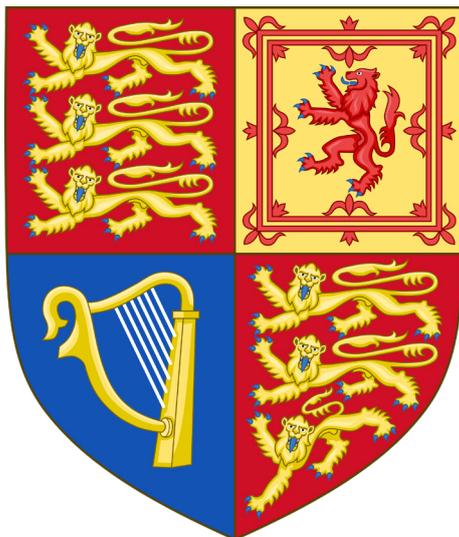
Lions = bravery

Dog = reliability

Stag = wisdom

Eagle = power

Hare = speed

The Royal Standard coat of arms, showing the Celtic harp, a symbol of Ireland.

5 OBJECT

You can also choose any object that represents you. Here are some ideas:
- a musical instrument
- sports equipment
- your favourite book
- someone in your family

6 MOTTO

A motto is a short sentence that summarises what motivates you or what you think is important. For example, the Scout motto is 'Be Prepared'. *Dieu et mon droit* means 'God and my right'.

Don't worry, your motto doesn't have to be in Latin!

The royal coat of arms of the United Kingdom.