Bath Abbey

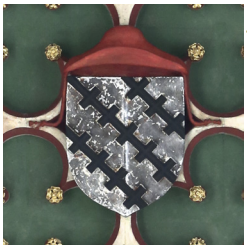
Heraldry

Throughout Bath Abbey, you can see coats of arms of families dating from the 1500s to the 1900s. Some are painted stone in the fan vaults (ceiling), some are stained glass windows and others are carved into marble monuments on the walls.

The reasons for having a coat of arms were to identify yourself during battles, record your personal or family history and show your achievements to others, especially those who couldn't read. The choice of shield shape and colour was important to give others an understanding of your values and life story.

The design could be complicated or simple.
Which of the shields here on the left belonged to a King, do you think?

You may be surprised to know that the one with the birds (called martlets) is King Edgar's. He was the King of the English and his Coronation was held in Bath Abbey in 973. The design of the Christian cross is called a Cross Flory and the martlets (which strangely are never shown with feet!), are a symbol of the ongoing search for knowledge.



Cardinal di Castello was the Bishop of Bath & Wells from 1504 to 1518 and he donated money to help build the fan vaults. His coat of arms appears five times in the fan vaults, but there is no evidence he ever visited the Abbey. Pope Innocent IV gave permission for Cardinals to have a red cap on top of their shields.

Thomas Bellot's shield can be seen in a stained glass window and also in the fan vaults. He was important because he managed donations of money in the early 1600s to help rebuild the Abbey when it was badly needed. He donated a silver chalice (a large cup) which the Abbey still has and is on display there.

The flowers represent peace. The shape of the shield, outstretched arm and motto (which means 'Always Bellot'), all represent strength and authority.

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Create your own Shield

Choose from the features below so that you feel your shield represents you, your family and your personality. Use the colours and symbols you like to create your own unique design on the shield outline. Cut it out then proudly display your own coat of arms!

1. Choose your colours:

BLUE: Loyalty

RED: Warrior

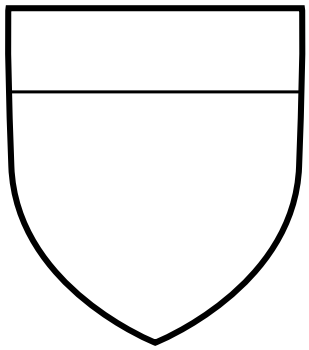
GREEN: Joy

GOLD: Generosity

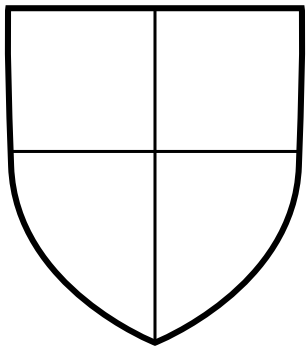
PURPLE: Royalty

SILVER: Peace

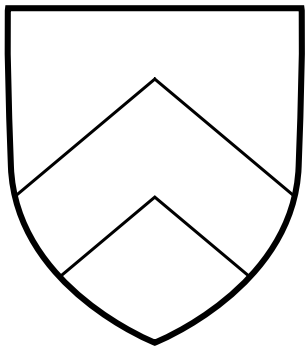
2. Choose your shield design:



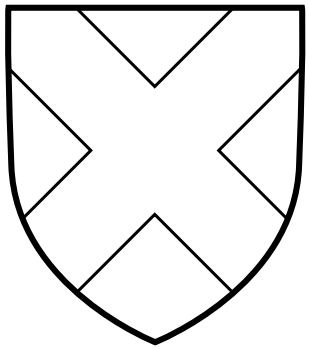
This is a 'Quartered' shield.
The sections were used to show extra family members.



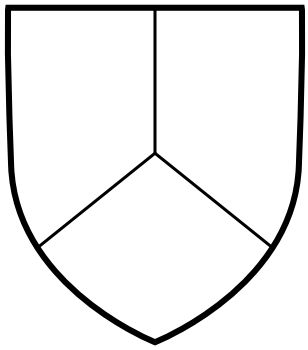
This is a 'Chevron'.
It represents the roof of a house, signifying protection. It was often used by those who had done noble work, e.g. built a church.



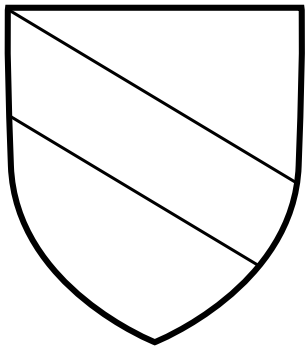
This is a 'Chief'.
It stands for dominance and authority, wisdom and good judgement.



This is a 'Bend'.
It represents either a scarf worn like a sash, or the strap to hold a shield. It stands for defence or protection.



This is a 'Pall Reversed',
which is used to show different family members in each section.



This is called a 'Saltire'.
It has the cross of St Andrew, the saint of Scotland. It symbolises endurance and the suffering of faith.

Next: choose your symbols on the next page.

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3. Choose the symbols below which you feel suit you best.

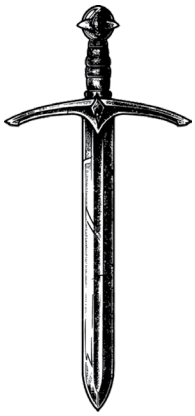
4. Draw your design (e.g. Chevron) onto the shield outline on the next page and then add your symbols.

5. Finally, **cut out the finished shield outline and display** your unique coat of arms!

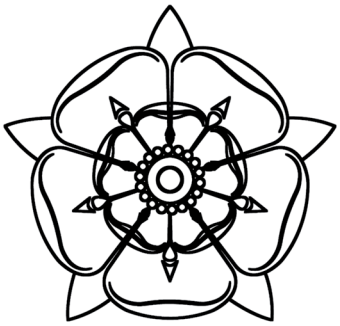
Renewal and Rebirth

Bravery

Wisdom and Courage



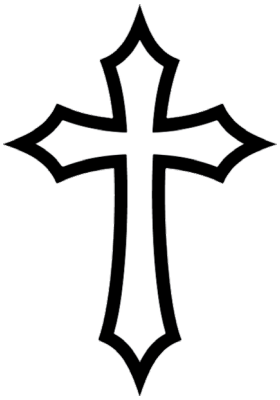
Freedom and Strength



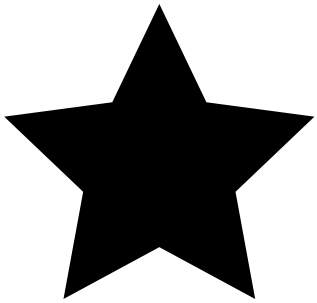
Beauty and Grace

Victory and Success

Loyalty and Protection



Faith



Hope

Christian Trinity, Purity and Light

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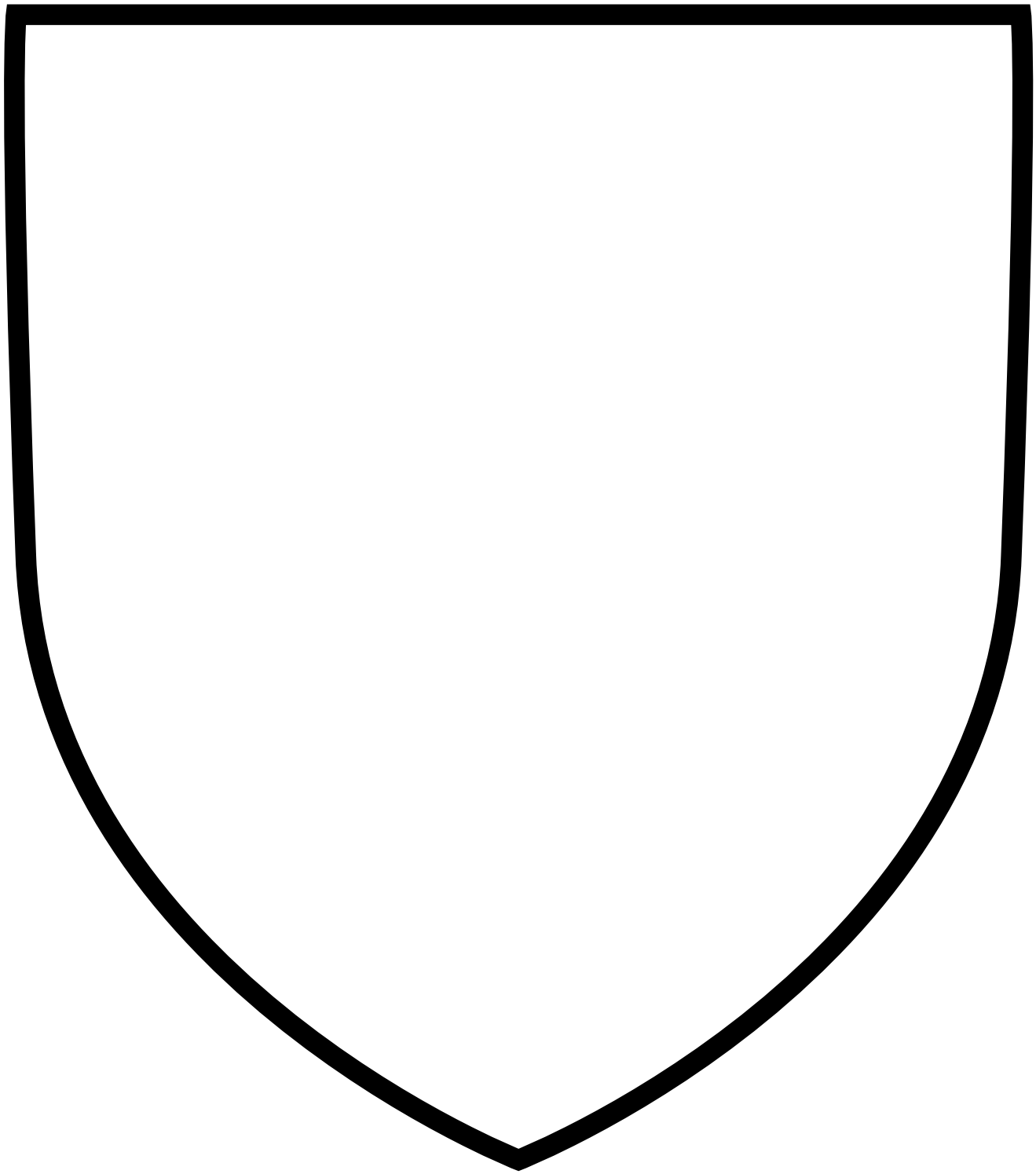

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