



A SUSSEX COAT OF ARMS

Under English heraldic law coats of arms are not granted to places, but only to the corporate bodies that govern them. Therefore if Sussex was to have a County Council of its own then perhaps the authority would bear arms along these lines?

ARMS: Azure six martlets three two and one Or.

CREST: On a Wreath Azure and Or out of an Antique Crown Or a martlet Azure crowned with a Saxon Crown Or supporting a Staff bearing an Escutcheon Gules charged with a Cross Argent with a cup in each quarter of the second and flying also therefrom a Banner of the Arms.

SUPPORTERS: On the dexter side a Round-headed Rampion Flower slipped and leaved proper and a Downsman habited in a Sussex Smock and on his head a Beaver Hat holding in the exterior hand a Pyecombe Hook Shepherd's Crook all proper and on the sinister side a Sprig of Oak fructed of one Acorn proper and a Bonfire Boy proper habited in a Guernsey barry Azure Or and Sable holding in the exterior hand a Torch enflamed proper.

MOTTO: 'WE WUNT BE DRUV' - We will not be driven.

This coat of arms is of course a fictional device and hasn't been authorised by the College of Arms, the official heraldic authority of England, Wales and Northern

Ireland. I simply created it just for fun as a symbol of, and in celebration of our county.

These arms are inspired by that of the Cornwall Council which features characters in local attire as supporting figures.

The escutcheon (or shield) is of course the longstanding heraldic device of six gold martlets on a field of blue which has been a symbol of the county since at least 1611.

Above the shield is the crest. It is commonly misinterpreted that an entire full achievement of arms is a 'crest' however this is untrue, a crest is just the component which sits above the shield, normally on a 'wreath'. In this example the wreath is coloured 'Azure' and 'Or' (Blue and Gold) to match the colours of the shield. The crest comprises of a blue martlet sitting in an 'Antique Crown' supporting a flagpole. This antique crown was influenced from the depiction of Sussex's heraldic badge used by the county's authorities from the mid 19th to mid 20th centuries which had an antique crown as a crest itself. The blue martlet is wearing a 'Saxon Crown', a representation of King Ælle, Sussex's first monarch, and the county's foundations as an independent nation; the Kingdom of the South Saxons! Upon the flagpole is a 'Gules' (red) shield bearing an 'Argent' (silver) cross with a cup in each quarter. These are the arms of Saint Richard, patron saint of Sussex! From the flagpole a 'banner of the arms' is flying, this means the pattern displayed on the arms stretched to fill a rectangular shaped cloth and happens to be the County Flag of Sussex.

Surrounding and supporting the shield at the base are two plants; a Round-headed Rampion and an oak sprig. Again, this is motivated by the depiction of Sussex's heraldic badge used by the county's authorities from the mid 19th to mid 20th centuries which was surrounded in this fashion by oak sprigs. The pedunculate oak or common oak is the county tree and is locally termed as 'Sussex Weed'. Sussex oak was thought to be the best timber for shipbuilding, being unmatched in durability and strength! In addition to the oak is the county flower of Sussex; the Round-headed Rampion, locally known as 'the Pride of Sussex'.

Either side of the shield are two figures wearing what could be both considered as the county's traditional garments. The Downsman is attired in a 'Sussex Smock', a local variation of the 'smock-frock', a garment worn by countrymen in England and Wales, particularly by shepherds, around the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The Sussaxon version of this dress is notable for its lack of elaborate decoration. Upon the Downsman's head is a 'beaver hat', again this is synonymous with the attire of a Downland shepherd. In his hand is a 'Pyecombe Hook', a distinctive shepherd's crook crafted in the old forge at the village of Pyecombe in Sussex.

On the opposite side of the shield is a Bonfire Boy carrying a lit torch, emphasising the county's rich and unique bonfire heritage. He is wearing the traditional smugglers uniform, distinctly associated with Sussex's bonfire celebrations. The smugglers guernsey is coloured fictitiously as to not favour any one particular Bonfire Society. The blue and gold colours alone are in use by South Heighton Bonfire Society, so Black was chosen, a minimal colour on the flag of Sussex, as an additional colour to create a novel guernsey.

You may also notice that the Rampion is on the same from side as the Downsman as it is the South Downs is where you find the flower on chalky ground. The oak can be found in the Weald where typically Bonfire Societies were founded.

At the base of the coat of arms is a scroll stating 'We Wunt be Druv'. This expression is the county motto of Sussex. It is a Sussex dialect phrase meaning "we will not be driven". The motto asserts that the people of Sussex, Sussaxons, have minds of their own, and cannot be forced against their will or told what to do.

This coat of arms is completely unofficial, they do not belong to anyone and you are more than welcome to make use of them to represent the County of Sussex! As I said at the beginning, these arms were created for a bit of fun and for my own amusement. It is crammed full with many symbols of our county and is a celebration of Sussex's unique and distinct heritage.