

# Standards, Banners and other Vexillological Subjects

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*The term standard properly refers to the long tapering flag used in battle, and under which an overlord mustered his retainers in battle. This did not display his armorial bearings. Next to the staff usually came the cross of Saint George which was depicted of course on a white field. (Kingdom badge or flag) This occupied rather less than one third of the standard. [Actually a fifth in all the examples he shows] The remainder of the standard was of the colour or colours of the livery, and thereupon was represented all sorts of devices, usually the badges, and sometimes the crest. The motto was usually on transverse bands, which frequently divided the standard into compartments for the different badges... The whole banner was fringed with the livery colours, giving the effect of a bordure compony.*

Fox-Davies

## Types of Flaggage

As Fox-Davies has noted, the standard is a long narrow flag which does not represent the arms, but instead has a general relationship to them with regard to use of colour and, sometimes, charges or badges. (This means that you do not have to have specific arms registered or even in mind in order to make a standard.) Typically they are made of silk, painted or embroidered, so that they fly readily in light winds. Traditional standards tend to be associated with 13th-16th century England, though they are also found in France, Germany and Italy. Although following basic heraldic practice, there are many variations in period examples.

Banners are typically square or rectangular and bear the formal arms within that shape (NB you do *not* use a shield shape on a banner). Banners are usually held rigidly attached to a vertical staff and/or horizontal bar. The gonfalon or gonfannon is an Italian version, often pointed, swallow-tailed, or with several streamer tails, and usually suspended from a crossbar; the French and Germans used these too. These are popular for wall displays, as they are often one-sided and made in appliqued fabric such as cotton drill.

Pennons are small standards, typically with a pointed or swallow-tailed/split end. They usually bear a badge or charge, and were traditionally affixed to lances. Guidons are larger variants; the pinsil is a much smaller version, triangular in shape. These can be useful in decorating an encampment, adding colour to a lists field, or identifying an area as belonging to a group, household, or individual. They are a good use of the silk offcuts left over from making a standard. Very long narrow streamers are associated with use on ships.

There are examples of lance pennons in the Bayeux Tapestry, along with semi-circular versions, some with tails or triangular edging. Even earlier, the quarter-circle metal "weather vanes" of Viking ships have been adapted for personal flags within the SCA. These also sometimes are seen with long vertical tails.

## Standard Design

In period, rank-based rules are said to have regulated the size and type of heraldic display you could use -- in Scotland, the King had a 7.5-metre standard; Barons and Knights 3.5 m. Lochac has no sumptuary laws, so you can make your standards or banners any size you like.

Typically, next to where the staff would be (termed the hoist) is your regional affiliation, such as the Southron Gaard tower, the populace badge of Lochac, or a household badge. You don't "stack" these but display just the one; or none as you wish.

The remainder of the standard uses the tinctures and charges you may have on your arms or use as a badge. While you don't have to have registered arms to make a standard, it is recommended that you follow accepted heraldic practices in developing your design, such as with regard to colour on metal and so forth.

The charges, typically are repeated in some fashion, such as three in decreasing size as you move from the hoist to the fly. Often the field is divided horizontally with the livery tinctures, or vertically divided by slanting motto bands (in left or right orientation). Mottos are sometimes written horizontally in large letters at the fly end of the standard. The main thing is to ensure some form of artistic balance, with the charges and mottos taking up a goodly proportion of the standard. The field can be diapered or plain.

The fly end can be rounded, pointed, swallow-tailed or split (some Kingdoms reserve non-rounded ends for Peers; Lochac does not). The edges of the standard are often decorated with alternating rectangles of the livery tinctures; this looks to be a late-period development though fringing is common on earlier banners.

## Practical Production Notes

In Southron Gaard, a standard is traditionally measured in the Baron's Girth, and practically at around 224cm in length; it has a width of 64cm at the hoist, narrowing to 32cm at the fly. (Again, this is not mandatory, just relates to the 115cm-wide silk we tend to use and the size of the available silk frames; for more on the amusing Baron's Girth, see here <http://sg.sca.org.nz/traditions.htm#girth>)

We have full-sized paper templates available, with the SG and Kingdom badges, and guide lines for dividing the field with a central horizontal line or with motto bands, as well as a range of fly end shapes. This makes it an easy matter to measure up and place full-size individual charges on the template ready for tracing the design onto the silk.

The charges should be large so they are clearly visible and well-proportioned. They can be repeated across the field, in large groups (such as three) or as smaller repeating units over the field. For SG standards, a set of three charges would usually be around 40cm, 35cm, 30cm in height, depending on the nature of the charge. Remember that heraldry abhors a vacuum, so make things as bold as you can.

Depending on slant, placement and preference, motto bands tend to be roughly 48cm and 40cm long, and 10-12cm in width. Bear in mind that the motto lettering needs to fit within the band so it should be short and to the point, with as large a lettering as you can fit.

The detail of the work pretty much depends on how comfortable you are using a paintbrush or needle. For a silk-painted standard, bear in mind that you are, in effect producing a colouring-in design, with the outlines being your resist paint and the dyes your crayons. Simple is sometimes more effective than lots of details lost in the flutter.

Examples demonstrating some general design principles:



A Baronial standard with Kingdom badge, motto bands and swallowtail fly.



Lady Ginevra's standard, with SG affiliation, repeating major charge, round end.

## References

- \* Armorial Display, suggestions for SCA Usage, Master Hirsch von Henford: <http://www.goldenstag.net/miscSCA/ArmorialDisplay.pdf>
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- \* Dictionary of Vexillology: <http://www.crwflags.com/FOTW/FLAGS/vxt-dtoc.html>
- \* Fox-Davies; *A Complete Guide to Heraldry*; Bloomsbury Books, 1985
- \* Gordon, Barbara; "Whips and Angels Painting on Cloth in the Mediaeval Period"; <http://web.archive.org/web/20030205223230/http://www.parma.bc.ca/articles/steyned.html>
- \* katherine kerr, her website; Banners and Standards page: <http://webcentre.co.nz/kk/banners.htm>
- \* Modar's Heraldic Display section: <http://www.modaruniversity.org/Heraldry2.htm#Display>
- \* Neubecker, Ottfried & Brooke-Little J.P.; *Heraldry Sources Symbols and Meaning*; Tiger Books International 1997
- \* Painting a Silk Banner for an achievement, Lady Dairine mor o' uHigin and Mistress Morgana <http://www.rencentral.com/GSS/Heraldic-silkpainting.pdf>
- \* Heraldic Display, Lady Sabine: [http://www.sca.org.au/st\\_florians/university/library/articles-howtos/heraldry/HeraldicStandards.htm](http://www.sca.org.au/st_florians/university/library/articles-howtos/heraldry/HeraldicStandards.htm)
- \* Personal Display for Vikings: <http://www.cs.vassar.edu/~capriest/display.html>
- \* Early Banner Types: <http://www.housebarra.com/EP/ep02/01banner.html>
- \* Heraldry for a Non-Heraldic Culture: <http://www.vikinganswerlady.com/vikheraldry.shtml>



Right: Full Heraldic Achievement with helm, crest, mantling and motto

Heraldic standard at the top



Above top: Banner Above below: Clan badge within stray



Charlemagne presenting Roland with a pennon.

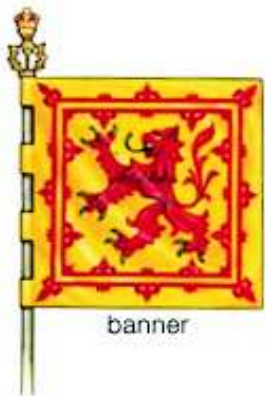


Left: A Roman draco (think standard meets windsock); also used by 9th century Franks and up until the 14thC

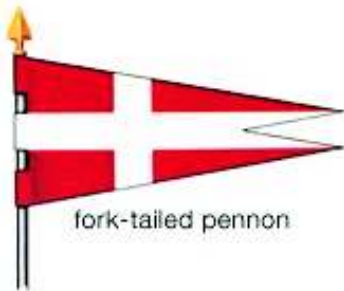
More info here:

<http://www.fectio.org.uk/articles/draco.htm>

Right: Lance pennon from the Bayeaux Tapestry



banner



fork-tailed pennon



standard

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Raven banner based on Viking windvane (prow ornament) design



Standard of the Earl Marischal of Scotland, carried at the Battle of Flodden Field, 1513

Badge in the hoist, horizontal motto on the field



A Swiss flaggen, Similar in approach to German usage or an Italian gonfalon