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Memory of Diana in Prince William's arms

CECIL R. HUMPHERY-SMITH

A new coat of arms designed to mark Prince William's coming of age was unveiled last year.

Arms chosen for the 19-year-old Prince draw on the Royal Arms used by the Queen and the Prince of Wales and, unusually, contain a tribute to his mother Diana, Princess of Wales in the shape of a small red scallop shell. Not since the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries has such commemoration been seen.

The shell, which derives from the Spencer coat of arms, was used by Diana and has been incorporated in the design at Prince William's

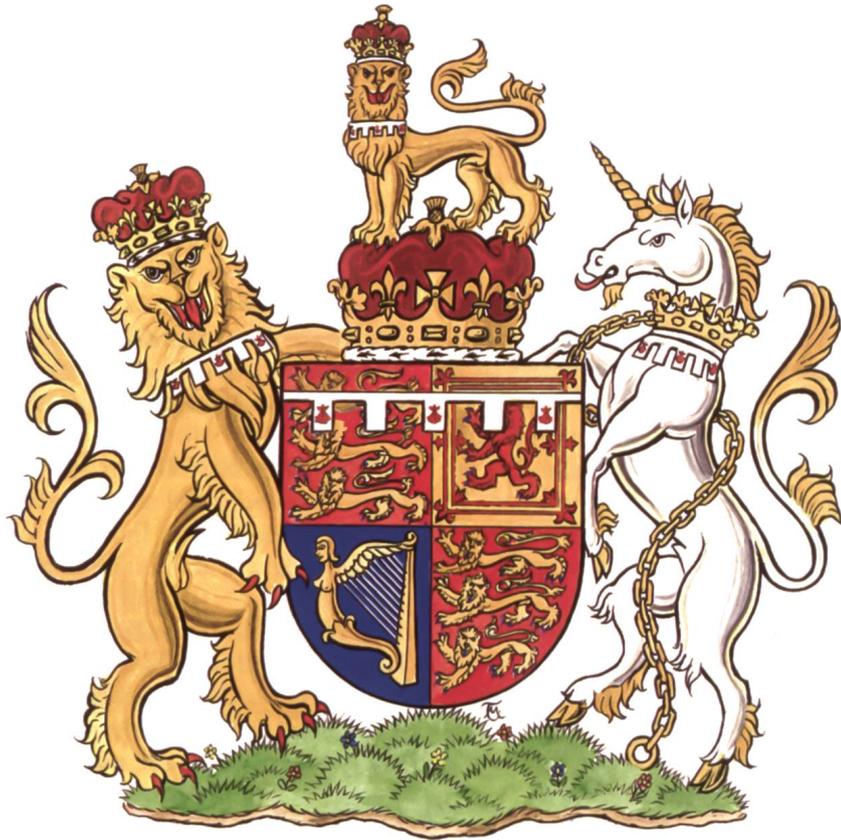
insistence. The scallop motif has been borne by the Earls Spencer since the 16th century and was a popular symbol for medieval pilgrims.

It appears four times: in the centre of the three-pointed label which adorns the shield, on the necks of the lion and unicorn and on the lion device above the shield.

Prince William, as heir apparent to the Heir Apparent, will be the Queen's only grandchild to be given a three-pointed label on his arms. They identify the children of a monarch while five-pointed labels are used for grandchildren.



Arms of Prince William
Artwork by Tom Meek



Arms of Prince Henry «Harry»
Artwork by Tom Meek

The design was approved by Prince William, his father, Prince Charles, and the Queen.

Peter Gwynne-Jones, Garter Principal King of Arms, responsible for Royal Heraldry, said: «It is a welcome innovation to incorporate maternal symbols into the Royal Family's arms and it is something that Prince William wanted to do. In the fullness of time, Prince William's arms will change but a precedent has been set that others in the Royal Family may follow.»

It is perhaps extraordinary that on this occasion the cross of St. George does not appear on

any of the label tabs. Traditionally, it has appeared to represent the claim to the English throne. The simple representation from the maternal arms, seems to be a departure to satisfy the public mood rather than heraldic precedence.

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