

ST CUTHBERT'S  
— CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL —

THE COAT OF ARMS OF SAINT CUTHBERT'S CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL,  
NEWCASTLE-UPON-TYNE.

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THE BLAZON \*

Arms impaled.

Dexter [For the Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle]:

Bleu celeste, a crozier Or between three castles of the second masoned Sable, two in fess and one in base, surmounted by a saltire Argent, fimbriated of the second overall.

Sinister[For Bishop Chadwick, Founder]:

Murrey, fimbriated Or, an inescutcheon of the second, between eight eider ducks proper, five in chief and three in base.

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In heraldry, **blazon** is a formal description of a coat of arms, flag or similar emblem, from which the reader can reconstruct the appropriate image. The verb *to blazon* means to create such a description. The visual depiction of a coat of arms (or flag) has traditionally had considerable latitude in design, but a verbal blazon specifies the essentially distinctive elements. A coat of arms or flag is therefore primarily defined not by a picture but rather by the wording of its blazon. *Blazon* is also the specialized language in which a blazon is written, and, as a verb, the act of writing such a description. *Blazonry* is the art, craft or practice of creating a blazon. The language employed in *blazonry* has its own vocabulary, grammar and syntax, which becomes essential for comprehension when blazoning a complex coat of arms. In blazonry, the heraldic colours (or "tinctures") always begin with a capital letter.

**The significance of the elements of the Coat of Arms.**

Marshalling is the practice of arranging two (or more) coats of arms in one shield. In this case, there are two coats of arms to be marshalled, those of the Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle and those of the Founder of the School, Bishop Chadwick.

There are several ways in which two coats of arms may be marshalled but the most common is that of **impalement** where the coats of arms appear alongside one another – as the do in the School's coat of arms.

**Dexter** and **sinister** are terms used in heraldry to refer to specific locations in a shield bearing a coat of arms, and to the other elements of an heraldic achievement. "Dexter" (Latin for "right") means to the right from the viewpoint of the bearer of the shield, *i.e.* the bearer's proper right, **to the left from that of the viewer**. "Sinister"

(Latin for "left") means to the left from the viewpoint of the bearer, the bearer's proper left, **to the right from that of the viewer.**

The dexter side is considered the side of greater honour, for example when impaling two coats of arms. More generally, by ancient tradition, the guest of greatest honour at a banquet sits at the right hand of the host. The Bible is replete with passages referring to being at the "right hand" of God.

The shield of a bishop shows the arms of his see (diocese) in the dexter half, and his personal arms in the sinister half.

In the case of the School's coat of arms, the arms of the diocese appear on the left-hand side of the shield as you look at it and the coat of arms of Bishop Chadwick appear on the right-hand side of the shield as you look at it.

In ecclesiastical heraldry particularly, the colours used in a coat of arms are often used to symbolise certain things or characteristics. Here are some examples:

Argent – white or silver: for the purity, holiness and simplicity of our baptismal calling and our life of faith in the imitation of Mary, the Mother of God.

Or – gold or yellow: the iconographic colour for Christ and the eternal uncreated light of God.

Sable – black: this is often used to represent a renunciation of secular pleasures.

Vert – green: the colour of eternal renovation, hope, flowering, youth, and nature.

It is often used to denote where life begins: for example, in the scenes of the Nativity of Jesus Christ and the Annunciation.

Azure – blue: often used to represent heaven or the Kingdom of God that is not on this earth. Being a symbol of another everlasting world, it additionally shows the infiniteness of the sky. Blue is also the colour of Mary, the Mother of God and is usually used in the religious icon paintings to show her heavenly nature.

Gules – red: the colour of the blood which Christ sacrificed on the Cross and the iconographic colour of martyrdom. It reminds us that, as baptised Christians, we are called to witness to Christ and to be ready to sacrifice our lives for Christ.

Purple – Purple: this is the colour of royalty and it is intended to show the glory of Jesus Christ and the Mother of God.

Murrey – maroon or mulberry: this often signifies fortitude or victory.

Tenné – tawny: the colour of the bare earth, dust, and all that is transient and perishable. Sometimes used in combination with the royal purple clothing of the Mother of God, this colour reminds one of her human nature.

Bleu celeste – sky blue: sometimes also used to represent either Mary, the Mother of God or the celestial kingdom of heaven.

### **The Coat of Arms of the Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle.**

The blazon indicates that the background of the shield is sky blue and the items which appear (the "charges") are as follows:

A crosier depicting the pastoral office of a Bishop depicted in gold.



The three castles (representing the City of Newcastle upon-Tyne) are also in gold but as “Or” has already been mentioned as the second colour after “Azure” in this blazon, the expression “of the second” is used.

The saltire is the white X-shaped charge surmounted across the coat of arms.

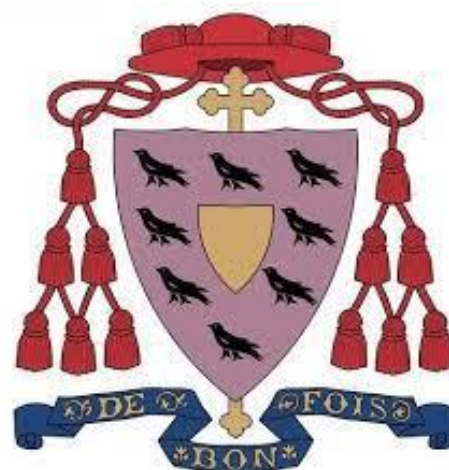
It is unclear whether the white saltire on a blue background was originally meant to represent the Flag of Saint Andrew, Patron Saint of Scotland (which territory the Diocese borders) or whether the blue background was in honour of Our Blessed Lady Immaculate, one of the two Patrons of the Diocese together with Saint Cuthbert, Bishop and Confessor – with the white saltire being an artistic way of separating the different heraldic charges of the three castles and the hook of the crosier.

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### The Coat of Arms of Bishop James Chadwick.

Bishop Chadwick was the second Bishop of the Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle and was the Founder of the School (1813 to 1882). These arms have many features which appear in the arms of a number of different families named Chadwick.

The oldest colour version of the arms of Bishop Chadwick show that the background (or “field”) of the shield is a particular shade of maroon or reddish -purple which is represented most nearly, heraldically, by the colour known as “Murrey” rather than the more common heraldic colour of “Purpure” which is more of a bluish-purple. The small shield in the centre of the coat of arms is known as an inescutcheon and, in this case, is gold.



The eider ducks are shown in their natural colours of black and white, hence they are referred to in the blazon as “proper”. While Saint Cuthbert lived on Saint Cuthbert's Isle, off the coast of Lindisfarne/Holy Island, he would pray for long times at night on the shores of the sea in all weathers and seasons. Legend has it that the sea otters would come and sit at his feet warming them in the freezing North Eastern weather. Legend also has it that he, like Saint Francis, conversed with the local ducks who would flock around him. He is recognised as one of the world's earliest wildlife conservationists and the Eider Duck is known locally as the Cuddy Duck or Cuthbert Duck in his memory.

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The two coats of arms appearing on the shield are surrounded by, and divided by, a very narrow border of gold, which is expressed in the blazon as “fimbriated Or”.

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### A very short glossary of heraldic terms.

Heraldic term:	Non-heraldic equivalent:
Argent	Silver or White.
Or	Gold or Yellow.
Gules	Red.
Sable	Black.

Azure	Blue.
Vert	Green.
Purpure	Purple.
Murrey	Maroon or Mulberry.
Sanguine	Blood red.
Tenné	Tawny.
Bleu celeste	Sky blue.
Impaled/Impalement	Setting side by side two (or more) coats of arms in a shield.
Field	The background of a shield, or part of a shield.
Charge	Anything borne on a coat of arms, whether upon the field, as is usually the case, or upon an ordinary, or upon another charge.
Ordinary	Certain charges in common use in arms – usually bordered by straight lines – such as the chief, the fess, the pale, the cross, the saltire, the bend, the bend sinister, the bar, and the chevron.
Masoned	A term used to describe the lines formed by the junction of the stones in a building. It is sometimes applied to a ‘field’ but, more frequently to a castle, tower, or wall.
In chief	In the top third of a shield.
In fess	Horizontally - across the middle of a shield.
In base	In the bottom third of the shield.
Saltire	This is a cross placed in a different position – it is turned through 45 degrees. Also known as a Cross decussate.
Proper	When a charge is in its natural colour(s), it is said to be proper.
Inescutcheon	A small shield normally in the centre of a coat of arms.
Fimbriated	Surrounded by a narrow edging or border