



### THE COMPONENTS OF A “COMPLETE ACHIEVEMENT”

**Heraldry** is both a science and an art form. It can be traced to the 12<sup>th</sup> century when coats of arms began to appear throughout Western Europe. Symbols were developed and placed on shields to identify knights in battle. The shield itself is called the coat of arms. The addition of decorative elements around the shield creates what is called a “**Complete Achievement**”.

The language and pictures used to **blazon** (*describe*) a complete achievement are precise because they represent specific families or institutions. The **herald** of the Middle Ages was a public speaker, an artist and a writer.

### BLAZON/DESCRIBE EACH COMPONENT OF YOUR COMPLETE ACHIEVEMENT

1. **The Coat of Arms** – This is the shield of the achievement. It contains 2-3 parts.
  - **Ordinaries and/or Divisions**- These are illustrated as simple geometric designs.
  - **Charges**-These are animate and/or inanimate symbols that represent the bearer of the arms; animals, fish, suns, towers, arrowheads, swords, ships, shells, etc.
2. **The Helm and/or Crown**- This component rests on top of the coat of arms and sometimes represents the rank of the bearer of the arms. Crowns represent nobility.
3. **Crest and Torse**- The crest is a decorative element that is placed upon the helm. The crest sits upon the torse which is a twisted wreath of ribbon.
4. **Mantling**- An elaborate decoration that falls from the torse and behind the shield.
5. **The Motto**- The motto is a guiding principle that is written onto a decorative ribbon below the shield.
6. **Supporters**- These animate or inanimate objects stand on the motto and rest against the shield to literally support it.