A banner for Queen Adelaide

BY JANE URWICK

This account of the making of a banner for Queen Adelaide's coat of arms must inevitably be rather personal, but it turned out to be a project of considerable interest and I felt the story of it might therefore appeal to readers of The Coat of Arms.

Without Queen Adelaide it is doubtful whether the Anglican cathedral of St Paul in Valetta, Malta, would ever have been built. She had suffered a good deal from ill health and after her husband King William IV died in 1837 she made several journeys abroad in search of relief, spending a year in Malta in 1838 and 1839. When she arrived in Grand Harbour in H.M.S. Hastings, she was greeted with tremendous enthusiasm and excitement, and endeared herself to one and all. Malta had not been honoured with a royal visit since the fifteenth century.

She was horrified to find there was no Church of England in the island and that the only place of worship for members of the Anglican community was a disused kitchen in the Governors' palace and for the troops a room was set aside every Sunday in the local jail. She wrote hurriedly to Queen Victoria (December 13, 1838) begging her to consider well this important subject and, as head of the Church of England, to discuss it with the Archbishop and her ministers, offering to subscribe to any fund that might be started and saying she felt sure a considerable sum could be raised amongst the Protestants in the island.

In the event, she decided by early January 1839 to find the necessary money herself and a site was found in Valetta which was originally the Auberge d'Allemagne of the Knights of St John and which, like all other public buildings and property of the Knights, had become Crown property in 1814 when Malta came under British rule. This old Auberge was being used as a bakery for the Fleet and part of it was the residence of the Chief Justice.

Work progressed fairly rapidly, for the Queen herself laid the foundation stone on March 20, 1839. The original estimate was for £8,000 but, as so often happens with such undertakings and due partly to the inefficiency of the first architect chosen and partly to further alterations suggested by Bishop Tomlinson, the final cost was £20,000. Queen Adelaide was obliged to find all the extra money herself, leaving nothing with which to endow the Cathedral as she had so much wished to do. A subscription raised amongst Protestants in England provided the organ and essential furniture and fittings, and the Government promised to provide a stipend for the chaplain. The financial arrangements have, of course, altered considerably over the years, some endowments have been made and the church is now entirely self-supporting. When, in 1962, it was found necessary to strip off the entire roof because of beetle and rebuild, the necessary £12,000 was raised by subscription, most of it coming from Malta and moreover from people of all denominations.

In 1842 a new diocese was about to be formed comprising Spain, Portugal, Madeira, Southern France, Italy, Yugoslavia, Romania, Bulgaria, Turkey, Greece, North Africa, the Canary and Cape Verde Islands, and of course, Malta. Queen Adelaide had hoped that the new Cathedral of St Paul would become the cathedral church of the diocese, but in deference to the feelings of the people of such a very Roman Catholic island as Malta, the bishop took Gibraltar as his title. Bishop George Tomlinson was the first bishop of this new diocese and it was he who consecrated the new cathedral on All Saints Day November 1, 1844. Queen Adelaide was not in Malta at the time but must have heard all about the splendid ceremony with the greatest satisfaction and read the long article in the London Morning Post describing it in detail. It is worth quoting the first paragraph of this article:—\(^1\) We feel a heartfelt satisfaction at the great benefits the munificent bounty of that exemplary Christian lady, the Queen Dowager, has conferred on the British inhabitants of Malta. Her Majesty's life is spent in showering blessings over the land, nor has she disdained to extend her succouring hand to supply the wants of our Christian brethren in distant parts. Her Majesty passed the winter of 1838-39 in Malta, and returned with renovated health, having previously given orders for the erection of a Protestant church; which, being the first and only one ever built there, we hope will for ages remain a monument of Her Majesty's pious zeal and love for all mankind...

The cathedral is rectangular with a free-standing tower and spire and, of course, is built of Malta stone which never fails to please the eye. The main front is in the form of a Greek temple with Ionic pediments and pilasters and blends very nicely with the rest of the buildings in the charming little square, now called Piazza Indipendenza, where it faces, across the square, the old Auberge d'Aragon. Bishop Tomlinson, who decided to live in Malta, chose this auberge as his residence. There are only two other spires in Malta, a small one on a very modern church and one on the 'Strawberry Hill Gothic' church of the main cemetery, as nearly all the churches are Baroque with domes. The Cathedral spire is a splendid landmark, visible from a good distance out to sea and up and down the coast.

The interior, consisting of a nave and aisles divided by Corinthian columns, is very pleasing but a trifle severe and insipid in colour, the windows being placed high up in the walls and having clear glass. There are a number of memorials on the walls and a certain amount of heraldry on the panelling in the chancel and on the pulpit (the crossed swords of St Paul), the bishop's chair and one or two other places. This heraldry includes a nice carved and painted wood coat of arms of Queen Adelaide over the organ, which is most probably contemporary, and there is also a small portrait of her hanging near the font.

Recently the Cathedral Council decided to hang some flags along each side of the nave which greatly enhances the appearance of the interior—the Union Jack, the White Ensign, the R.A.F. Ensign, the flags of Malta and of the Diocese and the flag of Admiral Sir William Fisher when he was serving in H.M.S. Barham as Rear Admiral, 1st Battle Squadron, Mediterranean Fleet in 1924-25. He became...
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Commander in Chief, Mediterranean Fleet, 1932-36, and was a trustee of the cathedral where he often worshipped and where this flag of his was laid up. At the same time the Council thought it would be very nice to remember Queen Adelaide's generosity by having a banner of her coat of arms in the chancel. After making enquiries at the College of Arms, they approached me and asked if I would make it. I felt very honoured and at the same time slightly alarmed when I realised what this involved—seventeen quarterings for Queen Adelaide plus a escutcheon of Saxony and another eight for William IV plus the Crown of Hanover—quite an undertaking.

However, there was apparently no hurry and a rough sketch would be provided by one of the Heralds. It was decided that the banner should be four feet square and should hang in the same manner as the Garter banners in St. George's Chapel, in other words, from a horizontal pole and not like the flags in the nave whose poles are at an angle of about forty-five degrees. I was given a free hand over the choice of material and decided to get it all in England. I found a nice terylene cotton twill in a good selection of colours, acrylic paints to match exactly (for such small items as the hearts, tongues, claws etc.) and machine-embroidery cotton in rather darker shades to show up the drawing of the charges. I decided to use the single appliqué method as double appliqué would have been too thick and bulky on Queen Adelaide's quarterings, which worked out at only eight inches square.

It took 144 hours spread over about three and a half months to make the banner and I enjoyed every minute of it. When I started I knew almost nothing about German heraldry and used the rough sketch provided by the College and various reference books and back numbers of The Coat of Arms, in particular Volume VI No. 48, of October 1961, containing Part III of C. R. Humphrey-Smith's and Michael Heenan's series of articles on the Royal Heraldry of England, in which is the full blazon of Queen Adelaide's arms. Strangely enough, there is no record of her arms at the College of Heraldry and there were two quarters in particular which gave me cause for doubt and further research—Nos. 2 and 14, for Cleves and Brena.

The blazon for No. 2 for Cleves is: Gules, an escarboucle Or and a escutcheon argent. Which charge should one show on top of, or debruising, the other? I looked it up in every book and chart I possess and found that some show it one way and some the other. Don Pottinger shows the escarboucle on top on his chart of the Kings and Queens of Great Britain for all three consorts, Anne of Cleves, Augusta of Saxo-Gotha and Queen Adelaide. As this chart has been edited by John Brooke-Little, therefore has the sanction of both English and Scottish heralds, and also as it looks nicer that way, I decided to use that arrangement. This was later confirmed, to my satisfaction at least, by a Cranach woodcut dated 1533 of Sybilla, wife of John Frederick the Magnanimous, Duke of Saxony, and a daughter of the Duke of Cleves, on which are shown the Cleves arms in that form.

Later on, also after the banner was finished, I was sent further confirmation by Major T. R. Davies—the official blazon of Queen Adelaide's arms as given for her father by the German Chancellery, dated 1910, together with tracings from one or two of Otto Hupp's illustrations. Major Davies also gave me an interesting piece of information. In an article in the Münchener Kalender for 1911 Herr Seyler says that the original arm for Cleves were simply: Gules, a escutcheon argent, and that the escarboucle is not actually a charge but was added later when the mediaval Herren v. Klev found other families in other states had the same arms as themselves at tourneries.

Quarter No. 14 for Brena has caused a great deal of argument: Argent, three beetle's piners gules. I know there are some very peculiar charges to be found in heraldry but who ever thought of beetle's piners? In C. R. Humphrey-Smith's blazon of Queen Adelaide's arms he puts a note at the end saying, 'These are originally leaves of nemaphur (sea-leaves) and are sometimes depicted as hearts.' Leaves of nemaphur is a delightful, euphonic charge and I badly wanted it for the banner. But in obedience to the rough sketch, I had made it piners. Then the Cranach woodcuts came to the fore again. The one of the Duke of Saxony, Sybilla's husband, also, of course, had his arms on it and there,
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amongst the charges, were the leaves of nemphar. Next, I was sent the blazon from the German Chancellery and it says see-bläter, which is apparently a fairly common German charge and is also used in Scandinavia. All this made me decide to alter the offending pincers, which I was able to do, and how much nicer the leaves of nemphar look! They fill up the shield much better for one thing, which it was impossible to make the pincers do. Their origin appears to be water-lily leaves with the stalk torn out. It is easy to see how they became either pincers or hearts over the years.

On the carved coat of arms over the cathedral organ, the lions rampant in the quarters on either side of the Queen’s arms are shown facing one another. This is a common German custom used for appearance’s sake, but as Queen Adelaide was Queen of England and the banner is in an English church, I decided to show them the English way, all facing dexter.

Quarter No. 11 for Pleissen, alias is incorrect: Azure, a lion passant per pale Or and argent. It should be: Azure, a lion rampant per fess Or and argent, and has become passant and party per pale over the years. One can see how this has come about if one imagines the Saxe-Meiningen arms only, without the impalement, on a shield or square banner, so that each quarter would be twice as long as it is high, since the blazon is specific in arranging the quarters in rows of three. It is then difficult to draw a lion rampant, particularly parted per fess, though it is true there are several other lions rampant in these arms and I think it must have been an artist’s error at one time. I discovered it too late to be able to alter it on the banner. In continental heraldry lions are always assumed to be rampant unless otherwise stated.

It will be realised that Queen Adelaide’s arms are almost entirely territorial, and do not indicate marriages or descent, but lands and appointments held or once held, stewardships, governorships or fiefs to which there was, or had once been, claim of entitlement. The Landgraf of Thuringia ceased to exist in the fourteenth century and became merged mostly with Hesse and partly with Saxony. So both Hesse and Saxony quarter the lion rampant berry argent and gules and, moreover, it takes pride of place. Then, on this banner there are quarters both the Landgraviate and the Palatinate of Thuringia, and the Kingdom of Saxony on a small escutcheon (row 2 No. 2) as well as the Palatinate of Saxony. There was in Germany a Kingdom of Saxony Dukedoms of Saxo-Coburg, Saxe-Meiningen, Saxe-Gotha, Saxe-Altenburg and Saxe-Saalfeld, also a Grand-Dukedom of Saxe-Weimar. Even after Bismark reduced the innumerable small states to a more manageable number, bits of some states became merged with several others and the whole became a most complicated heraldic jigsaw. In spite of this it will be noticed that each of Queen Adelaide’s quarters on its own is very simple, having only a single charge (counting two pales or three chevrons as one charge) and therefore looks far less of a muddle than the coats one sometimes sees consisting of sixteen or more quarterings, some of which are a whole story in themselves.

The quarter gules plain is for the enjoyment of sovereign rights and is found in several German coats of arms.

William IV’s arms are, of course, fairly straightforward, though it may not always be realised that it was not until 1801 that the title King of France was dropped and consequently, the fleur-de-lys quarter was dropped from the Royal Arms, which had become very muddled-looking when the arms of Hanover were in the fourth quarter. In 1801 they were placed instead on an inescutcheon in the centre, as was Nassau in William and Mary’s arms, and at that time this was ensign with an Elector’s bonnet. Then in 1814 the Congress of Vienna erected the Electorate of Hanover into a Kingdom and the Crown of Hanover replaced the bonnet.

Queen Adelaide’s banner was finally dedicated on November 2, 1975 by Bishop John Satterthwaite of Fulham and Gibraltar, and now hangs in the chancel, showing up well against the dark panelling. Beneath it, in two little alcoves, are a coloured photograph of a portrait of Queen Adelaide belonging to Her Majesty the Queen and hanging in Buckingham Palace, and in a matching frame, a beautifully written blazon of the banner.

Blazon of the banner

KING WILLIAM IV
2. Or, some of hearts gules, a lion rampant azure — Lunenburg.
3. Gules, a horse running argent — Westphalia and overall an inescutcheon charged with the Golden Crown of Charlemagne, the badge of the Archchancellorship of the Holy Roman Empire. The whole ensign with the Royal Crown of Hanover.

Impaling—

QUEEN ADELAIDE
Quarterly of 17 (2, 3, 2, 2, 3, 2, 3, 3) with an escutcheon occupying the middle place in the second row: Barry Or and sable, a rautenkranz vert — Saxony.

1. Azure, a lion rampant per pale or and argent — Nassau.
2. A escarboucle Or and a escutcheon argent — Cleves.
3. Or, a lion rampant sable — Meissen.
4. Or, a lion rampant sable, crowned gules — Julich.
5. Argent, a lion rampant gules, crowned azure — Berg.
6. Azure, an eagle displayed, crowned Or — Palatinate of Saxony.
7. Or, two pales azure — Landberg.
8. Sable, an eagle displayed Or — Palatinate of Thuringia.
9. Or, some of hearts gules, a lion rampant sable crowned gules — Oranienburg.
10. Argent, three bars azure — Eisenberg.
11. Azure, a lion passant per pale Or and argent — Pleissen.
12. Argent, a rose gules — Altenburg.
15. Or, a fess chequy argent and gules — Mark.
16. Gules, a column argent crowned Or, impaling: Or, on a mount vert a cock sable, wattled gules — Römhild / Hennepin.
17. Argent, three chevrons gules — Ravensberg.
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**KING WILLIAM IV**

Quarterly: 1 & 4 England, 2 Scotland, 3 Ireland, overall an escutcheon of Hanover:

Tierced in pairs reversed: 1. Gules, 2 lion passant guardant in pale or — Brunswick.
2. Or, some of hearts gules, a lion rampant azure — Luneburg.

and overall an escutcheon charged with the Golden Crown of Charlemagne, the badge of the Archdeanership of the Holy Roman Empire. The whole ensignied with the Royal Crown of Hanover.

**Impaling**

**QUEEN**

Quarterly of 17 (3, 2, 3, 3) with an escutcheon occupying the middle place in the second row: Barry Or and sable, a rauterkranz vert — Saxony.

1. Azure, a lion rampant barry argent and gules — Langhavide of Thuringia.
2. An escarboucle Or and a sejant argent — Cleves.
3. Or, a lion rampant sable — Meissen.
4. Or, a lion rampant sable, crowned gules — Julich.
5. Argent, a lion rampant gules, crowned azure — Berg.
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7. Or, two pales azure — Landsberg.
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