

College of Arms: Enquiries

1. First incorporated by Richard III, the College is the official repository of the arms and pedigrees of English, Northern Irish and Commonwealth (except Canadian) families and their descendants. The 13 officers of the College specialise in genealogical and heraldic work for their clients.

Arms have been, and still are, granted by letters patent from the King of Arms. A right to arms can be established only by the registration in the official records of the College of Arms of a pedigree showing direct male descent from an ancestor who is/was entitled to arms, or by applying through the College of Arms for a grant of arms.

From time to time, naturalised or registered British citizens petition the College of Arms for a grant of Armorial Bearings. The College of Arms asks the Home Office whether we know of any reason why the petition should be rejected.

Such enquiries should be dealt with as soon as possible and any necessary enquiries made if the papers on file suggest anything dubious about the petitioner.

If we can see no reason why a grant of Armorial Bearings to the petitioner should leave the College of Arms open to any embarrassment, we may write to the College of Arms confirming the date on which the petitioner became a British citizen and saying that we are not aware of any reason why a grant of Armorial Bearings should not be made. Before writing along these lines, the College of Arms should be asked to obtain the petitioner's authorisation to disclose details of the grant of certificate.