

Jamaica's Coat Of Arms

Our National Symbols are representative of our rich history and culture. They define us as a people – Jamaicans who are proud of where we are coming from

In giving consideration to what might be the form of an appropriate Coat of Arms for an Independent Jamaica, both Government and the Opposition reached agreement in principle that the existing Arms, granted Jamaica since 1661 under Royal Warrant and partially revised in 1957, constituted "a badge of - great historical significance to the nation and should be retained".

The original Arms were designed by William Sancroft, who later became Archbishop of Canterbury, and the use of the Royal Helmet and Mantlings together is a unique distinction accorded Jamaica. However, the design has also been attributed to William Juxon as he was the then Archbishop of Canterbury and not Sandcroft as he assumed this position in December 1677.

The anonymous author who is the authority for Sancroft's connection with the affair says "All this as I have heard, was designed by the present Archbishop of Canterbury in the year 1661". This statement was written in 1684 when Sandcroft was the present Archbishop.

It is stated that the original grant of arms was made in February 1662 not 1661. The latter year is an error owing to the change in 1752 from the old style of dating to the new.

The New Year began on March 25 so that what was then 1661 would be 1662 to us.

The original Latin motto, "Indus Uterque Serviet Uni" has been changed to one in English: "Out of Many, One People". The arms show a male and female Taino (Arawak) standing on either side of the shield which bears a red cross with five golden pineapples superimposed on it. The Crest is a Jamaican crocodile surmounting the Royal Helmet and Mantlings.

This is the official description of the Jamaican Coat of Arms as taken from the records of the College of Arms, London: "For Arms, Argent on a Cross Gules five pine-apples slipped OR: and upon a representation of Our Royal Helmet mantled OR doubled Ermine, for the Crest, On a Wreath Argent and Gules, Upon a Log fesse wise a Crocodile Proper: And for the Supporters, On the dexter side a West Indian Native Woman holding in the exterior hand a Basket of Fruits and on the sinister side a West Indian Native Man supporting by the exterior hand a Bow all proper."

Changes in the Coat of Arms: The Jamaica coat of Arms has seen quite a number of changes, but only three are officially recorded. These changes occurred in 1692, 1957 and 1962 respectively.

The use of the Coat of Arms should not be permitted without official sanction being first obtained from the Prime Minister's Office.

Although the colours of the Supporters are described as all proper, that is, in natural colours, it should be noted that in the approved colour sketch the feathered headdress and feathered skirts are red and white.

The single feather in the female figure's headdress is red, and the headband ermine is winter white. The three tall feathers on the male figure are red, the headband and the shorter feathers alternately red and white, commencing with the red (on the left as seen by the observer) and the ending with a white feather on the right. The waistbands on the feathered skirts of both supporters are red.

The strips of feathers making up the skirts are alternately red and white commencing with the red (on the left as seen by the observer) and ending with outer white feathers on the right.

Key to Heraldic terms Argent Silver traditionally represented in heraldic design by white Gules
 Red Slipped Superimposed OR Gold Ermine White (winter white) Crest
 The heraldic device placed above the helmet and separated from it by a wreath Wreath A twisted band or
 ribbon of two or more alternate colours on which the crest usually rests. Fesse wise Horizontal
 Supporters Figures which flank and support the shield Dexter Right (left as seen by the observer)
 Sinister Left (right as seen by the observer) Exterior Outer Proper All representations
 of the relevant elements or features are in their natural (that is not heraldic) colours.

All the figures on the coat of Arms represents Jamaica in different aspects: The Pineapples - as the indigenous fruits. The Tainos - as the first inhabitants of the country. The Crocodile - as the indigenous reptile in the country and The use of the Royal Helmet and Mantlings is a unique distinction accorded to Jamaica by the British.