



Official blazon

Arms: Azure a representation of the Sword in its Scabbard of the St Edmundsbury Borough Council proper between in fess two pairs of Arrows each in saltire points downwards Argent enfilng an Ancient Crown Or.

Crest: On a Wreath of the Colours upon a Grassy Mount a Wolf sejant proper resting the dexter paw upon a King's Head couped at the neck also crowned Or; Mantled Gules doubled Argent.

Supporters: a Lion chevronny Or and Gules charged on the shoulder with a Roundel Gules fretty Or sinister an Ounce Sable bezanty gorged with a Collar compony counter compony Argent and Azure and charged on the shoulder with a Roundel Or fretty Sable.

Motto: 'SACRARIUM REGIS CUNABULA LEGIS' - Shrine of the King, cradle of the law

Origin/meaning

The arms were officially granted in 1977.

Whereas the possession of a mace or maces was a legitimate ambition of every corporation - a right granted to Bury St. Edmunds by the Charter of Incorporation in 1606 - the right to have a sword has always been more sparingly granted. Bury St. Edmunds was one of the few towns to be granted the right for a Sword of State in the 17th Century, by Letters Patent of Charles II dated 3rd July, 1684. The former Corporation's Minute Book records that on 2nd October 1684 thanks were given to Sir Thomas Hervey for the gift of the Mayor's Sword which he presented upon the King creating Bury St. Edmunds a "Mayor Town". A Minute of 29th December in the same year recorded that the Mayor shall have the sword and Maces carried before him on such days as the Maces were formerly carried before the Alderman. Although the Charles II Charter of 1684 was declared null and void when his brother James II fled the country in 1688, the Sword continued to form part of the insignia of the Borough. The Charter of 1974 perpetuated the right to have a Sword and Maces, and to appoint local officers of dignity - Sword and Mace Bearers. The ancient crowns and crossed arrows were in the arms of the former Borough Council of Bury St. Edmunds. They depict the crown of Edmund, the Martyr King of East Anglia from whom the town takes its name; the arrows refer to the manner of his death in 869 at the hands of the Danish invaders for refusing to renounce his Christian faith. Similar crowns are contained in the arms of the diocese of St. Edmundsbury and Ipswich and were also included in the Arms of the former West Suffolk County Council.

The crest is based on the legend of King Edmund. Edmund is said to have become King when only a boy in 855. His Kingdom roughly corresponded to Norfolk and Suffolk. In 869 the Danes marched on East Anglia and took up their quarters at Thetford. According to traditional accounts King Edmund went with his army and fought a battle with them but was defeated and captured. The Danes tied him to a tree and shot him to death with arrows. Legend has it that after the Danes had gone the King's

subjects returned to bury him and found his body, but the head was missing. Searching for the head they heard a voice in the forest cry out "Here I am". Moving towards the voice they saw a wolf standing over the head, as if guarding it. On their approach the wolf disappeared and they took up the head which was afterwards miraculously joined to the body, which was eventually brought to Bury St. Edmunds for burial. The story is told in the writings of Abbot of Fleury, a French scholar who died in 1004, so it must have been believed soon after it is said to have happened. Hence the crest of a wolf guarding a crowned head of a King. The grassy mount or hill may be taken as a reference to Haverhill.

The left supporter shows the royal lion with chevrons. The chevrons are inspired by the fact that the Arms of de Clare, a family from whom the rural district derived its name, included a similar device. The supporter to the viewer's right is based upon the crest of the former Thingoe Rural District Council and is also included in the arms of the Marquis of Bristol of Ickworth. Each of the supporters has been charged on the shoulder with a roundel on which is a fretty design. These are an allusion to Haverhill - a fret being reminiscent of weaving - an industry which was once carried on in the town to a greater extent than at present.

The motto - SACRARIUM REGIS, CUNABULA LEGIS - emphasises the historic importance of Bury St. Edmunds. The first part "Shrine of the King" refers to the burial place of King Edmund, around whose shrine was built the greatest ever Benedictine Abbey. "Cradle of the Law" refers to Magna Carta and reminds us that the law which gave Englishmen the freedom had its origin at Bury St. Edmunds. Towards the end of 1214, according to the Chronicler, Roger of Wendover, a number of Barons, disguised as pilgrims, took an oath before the High Altar in the Abbey at Bury St. Edmunds, that they would make King John put his seal to the Great Charter. This he did at Runnymede, on the banks of the Thames near Windsor in June 1215. From the provisions of Magna Carta, developed and amended from time to time, have come many laws to prevent oppression and injustice.