

WHO IS TONY BUZAN? THE MANY LIVES OF TONY BUZAN

TONY BUZAN'S MINI BIOGRAPHIES/CURRICULA VITAE

COAT OF ARMS

INTRODUCTION

On 26th day of August 2008, Tony Buzan was granted Armorial Bearings by Her Majesty's College of Arms.

One of the many thrilling aspects of being granted Armorial Bearings is the challenge of creating, in a single formalised image, a summary of the main elements and aspirations of one's entire life.

A daunting task...

Tony had an expert team to help him, including Thomas Woodcock, Norroy College of Arms, Robert Parsons, Senior College of Arms artist, Grand Master Raymond Keene, an expert in the field, the artist Lorraine Gill and the Visio-technologist Richard Morris.

The team met regularly for a year and produced a unique Coat of Arms. Shortly after the successful completion of the Coat of Arms, Robert Parsons was made an MBE for his life-long excellence in producing artwork for Armorial Bearings, and Thomas Woodcock was promoted to Garter King of Arms – the most senior position in the field.

Let Tony take you on a guided tour of the joint creation:

PURPOSE

The original point of a Coat of Arms was to identify, with an immediately recognisable personalised visual symbol, each member of your army in mediaeval battle; the battle now being fought is for the Human Brain and Planetary Mental Literacy.

MOTTO

Each Coat of Arms rests on the base of a motto which is inscribed on the supporting scroll. After much deliberation, and considering mottos that had inspired me throughout my life such as '*Mens Sana in Corpore Sano*' (Healthy Mind Healthy Body; Healthy Body Healthy Mind); *Carpe Diem* (Seize the Day!); and *Semper Solutio!* (there is Always a Solution!), I settled on the more vast and inclusive: *Omne Immensum Peragravere Mente Animoque*, which translates literally into: '*all*', '*immensity*', '*to traverse*', '*mind*', '*spirit*' and which fully translated means: "*to Traverse, in Mind and Spirit, the Great Immensity (the Universe).*"

SHIELD IMAGE 1

In the major part of the shield of the Coat of Arms, one is allowed any image desired. I wanted my image to be inspired by the incredible Dutch artist and etcher Maurice Escher, famous for his visually tantalising and complex images which provide the viewer with many simultaneous and differing perspectives. Similarly I wanted expressed Escher's constant theme of Metamorphoses and mastering the processes of change.



In the shield's main image I also wanted to include:

- Pieces from the 'King of Mind Sports' chess, a game that has informed and inspired me throughout my lifetime;
- Concorde, the plane that fired many imaginations around the world, including mine, and on which I wrote 385 poems about Her;
- Outstanding representatives of fish and birds;
 - For the fish I chose the three-spined stickleback (*Gasterosteus aculeatus*), arguably the most intelligent 'pound-for-pound' fish. As a young boy I had bred them, and had been astonished by their intelligence, social organisation, fighting ability, determination and sheer physical and functional beauty.
I was later to discover that Nicholas Tinbergen, one of the founders of ethology, the scientific study of animal behaviour in natural surroundings, was awarded a Nobel prize for revealing the incredible social infrastructures, behaviours, and intelligencies of the beautiful little fishes that had so entranced me as a child;
 - For the bird I chose the swallow, for the Concorde-like beauty of its design, and for its speed and gracefulness;
- A spaceship to symbolise my fascination with the planets and the universe;
- A warrior;
- A fairytale palace;
- Tree forms;
- Dancers;
- The Eiffel Tower – a building that holds many special memories for me.

I had also wanted the image to include the concepts of Focus and Radiance.

At first the task seemed an impossible one, especially as the shape of the shield was not conducive to Escher's perspectival illusions. We worked on it as a team, and finally, after filling a sketch-pad full of ideas, Richard Morris hit on the brilliant image that, in this context, was the first ever of its kind, and which is a prime focus of the Coat of Arms.

SHIELD IMAGE 2

At the top of the shield, and protecting everything below it, is a raptor – a bird of the eagle/peregrine/falcon family. 'Peregrine' and 'peregraver' forged a pleasing additional flight of associations.

The eagle was, when I was a child, my favourite bird, and Alfred Lord Tennyson's poem **The Eagle**, transformed my writing and poetic lives (see POETRY).

HELMET

Above the shield there must, in a Coat of Arms, be a helmet which can face to the left, to the right, or face-on. I chose face-on, because it was more direct, and symbolic of honesty, focus and commitment.

THE MANTLE

Embracing the entire shield and helmet, the Coat of Arms must have a mantle. I designed mine to be particularly organic, mirroring the forms and shapes of Nature and Mind Maps, and emanating, like a Mind Map, from the central image in a way that symbolised reaching out into the Universe.

I also wanted the mantle to reflect the willow-like grace and flowing quality of my major martial art, Aikido – *'The Way of Harmony'*.

THE DRAGON

Above the helmet I was privileged to be able to use, because I had been honoured in 1984 with the title of Freeman of the City of London, the City of London's own symbol: the dragon. The dragon symbolises power, astuteness and wisdom, qualities which I personally revere. London's dragon was placed over the Temple barrier in early times, which was the official (and only) entrance to the City of London. The dragon was the guard and guardian, and symbol for the ideals of the City.

In Asia, an area of the world where my work is increasingly widespread, and where I am spending a growing amount of my time, the dragon is a creature that brings with it ultimate abundance, prosperity, and good fortune. The dragon is the emblem of the Emperor and Imperial Command, and its benevolence signifies greatness, goodness and blessings. The Chinese dragon symbolises auspicious power and excellence, valiancy and boldness, heroism and perseverance, nobility and divinity, energy, light and rebirth. A dragon overcomes obstacles until success is his, and is energetic, decisive, optimistic, ambitious and intelligent. Most Eastern Dragons are beautiful, friendly, and wise. They are known as the 'Angels of the Orient'.

The dragon is also the symbol of Wales in the United Kingdom, where the headquarters of Think Buzan are located in Cardiff. The Celtic Red Dragon is a symbol of power, wisdom and one who has overcome an adversary and adversity. The Celtic dragon also represents sovereignty and power. When used as 'Pendragon', it becomes the Celtic word meaning 'chief'.

The Red Dragon on the Royal badge for Wales is traditionally augmented by enclosing it in a scroll carrying the words *Y DDRAIG GOCH DDYRY CYCHWYN*, which means *'the Red Dragon inspires action'*.

According to Ancient and Heraldic traditions, much symbolism is associated with colours. The Welsh Dragon is coloured red, symbolising hardiness, bravery, strength and valour.

THE DRAGON'S WEAPONS

In the 'hands' of the dragon one can choose further symbols. I chose the pen and the sword, putting a new twist on the standard saying '*the pen is mightier than the sword*'.

As a writer I obviously needed a pen, so chose the original writing implement – the quill, symbolic of both writing and nature.

In the right hand I chose a sword that is-and-is-not a sword. It is actually a neuron – a brain cell, symbolising, for the Warriors of the Mind, the immortal battle for the freedom of Intelligence.

The brain cell is also the inspiration for my valediction *Floreat Dendritae!* – '*May Your Brain Cells Flourish!*'

COLOUR

The colours were potentially a difficult choice for me, because I love the rainbow!

The choice was made easier by considering again the original purpose of the Coat of Arms: the colours had to give clarity to the overall image, had to be strong, had to support the themes of the Armorial Bearings, and had to be powerfully distinctive. Four different colours were considered the ideal number.

I chose, therefore: blue; gold; silver; and purple.

Blue

Blue is a colour that represents both the physical and the metaphysical. In the physical realm, blue is the colour of both the sea and the sky on a sunny day. In the metaphysical realm, the azure of the sky leads to the universe and the heavens, the gateway to all that we have yet to traverse and explore.

For this reason blue is often considered "*a colour of the mind and spirit*".

Gold

Gold, and its lustrous ore, are an integral part of the grammar of heraldry.

Gold represents purity, rarity, and a symbol of the *'idea'* for which all people strive. Gold has a hint of rarity about it, and traditionally was used to symbolise and communicate excellence.

Tennyson's **The Eagle**, was a poem written about the *Golden Eagle*!

Gold is also a symbol of desire and passion, and is the colour used throughout both heraldry and by the great artists to symbolise energy, the sun, radiance, incorruptibility and eternity.

Blue/Gold

In addition to their individual qualities, blue and gold are complimentary colours. They are therefore ultimately distinct colours which give further clarity and power to an overall image. Optically each stands out, and helps the eye to distinguish elements within the image.

Silver

Silver is the colour of purity and reflection. Reflection in the physical sense, where the colour acts as a mirror, and reflection in the mental/spiritual sense of contemplation and the examining of oneself.

Silver is the actual colour of most helmets, and is the natural colour of the three-spined stickleback.

In the Coat of Arms you will notice that the mantle has a "silver lining".

Purple

Purple was the most-prized colour in classical civilisations. It could be produced as a dye only by the delicate processing of molluscs, and was, like gold, prized for its rarity. In addition to its luxurious quality, it represented power and elegance, and was therefore used by the first emperors.

In modern times it has come to represent, increasingly, the spiritual world.

Purple and Gold

Purple and gold are another powerful combination of colours.

The strength of their marriage is succinctly stated in George Gordon Lord Byron's most-quoted lines:

**The Assyrian came down like the wolf on the fold,
And his cohorts were gleaming in purple and gold;
And the sheen of their spears was like stars on the sea,
When the blue wave rolls nightly on deep Galilee.**

Colours Conclusion

Blue, gold, silver and purple are colours that are deeply woven into the tradition of heraldry. They are colours which optically have great clarity, and which contextually tie in with the overall themes of the Coat of Arms.

My Armorial Bearings needed to be a composite, revealing the beauty of Nature, my personal history, and my ideals.