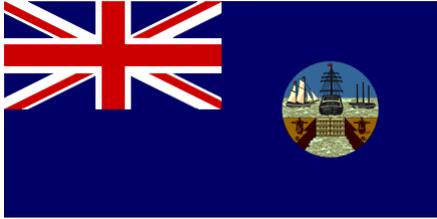


Flags of the British Empire and the Commonwealth

Blue Ensigns

Bermuda



No organized system of colonial flags existed until 1865 when the Admiralty ruled that the flag that should be worn by any vessel maintained by a colony under the terms of the Colonial Naval Defence Act should be a Blue Ensign with the Seal or Badge of the colony in the centre of the fly. The vessel should additionally wear a Blue Pennant unless it was not commissioned as a vessel of war.

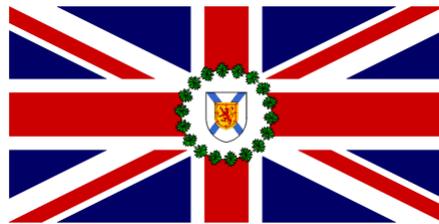
Flags of Governors

Bermuda



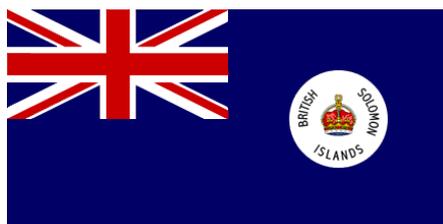
A further series of colonial flags was authorised in 1869 for the use of colonial governors when embarked in a vessel on waters within their jurisdiction; the Arms or Badge of the colony encircled by a garland in the centre of a Union Jack.

Some badges were on Union Jacks but not on Ensigns,

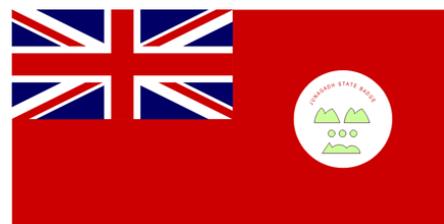


Nova Scotia

and some were on Blue Ensigns and Red Ensigns but not on Union Jacks.

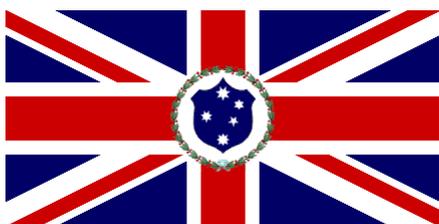


British Solomon Islands

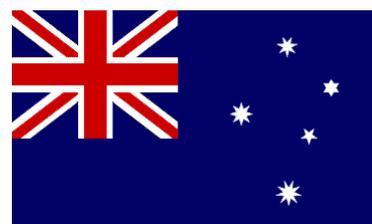


Junagadh

Where a colony needed both flags, the same badge should have been used on each one, but at first this requirement was not always observed.



Victoria



Design of the Badge



The governor of a colony submitted a drawing of the proposed badge of the colony to the Colonial Office which consulted the Admiralty before approving the design. Few colonies had Arms, none had a Badge, but all had a Public Seal that followed a standard pattern; the Royal Arms above a panel that contained an allegorical scene or landscape relevant (more or less) to the colony.



Twenty-four of the fifty flag badges authorised up to 1880 were based upon the pictorial panel of the Seal,

Falkland Islands



and nine were Arms,

Cape Colony

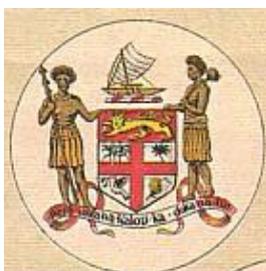


or elements of Arms

Quebec



The scene on the Seal could not always be adapted to make a satisfactory badge, and approval was also given for original designs that were not based on the Seal or Arms. Usually these were crowns or other royal emblems, often in combination with words, initials or stars.



At the beginning of the 20th century colonies were encouraged to apply for Arms. Not many did, as governors of smaller colonies considered that the cost, born by the colony, could not be justified. Those that were granted Arms used them, or part of them, as the badge on the ensign.

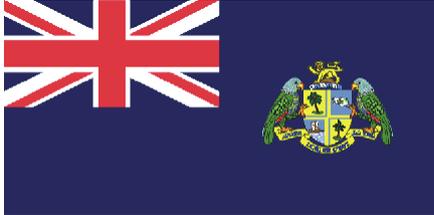
Fiji



In the Nineteen-Twenties and Thirties badges were designed by the Royal Mint Advisory Committee that was responsible for the production of coins, medals and decorations.

Tanganyika

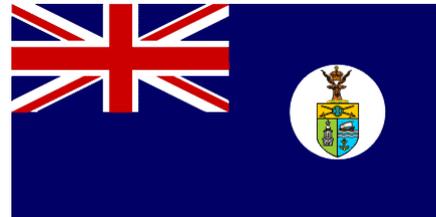
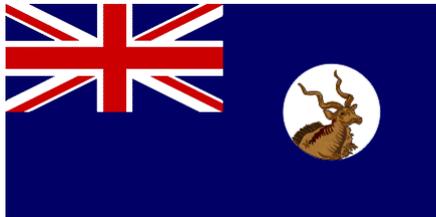
Dominica



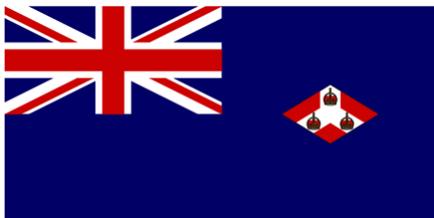
Sixty-five different badges were in use in 1949 when the British Commonwealth was renamed The Commonwealth of Nations. Twenty-seven were Arms or elements of Arms, twenty-two were derived from Seals and fourteen were royal emblem, star, word/initial combinations. The total number of badges decreased as colonies gained independence, but twenty-three new

badges were created for territories that had been parts of former federal colonies. These badges were now almost exclusively based upon Arms granted and designed by the College of Arms, which also revised seven existing badges.

British Somaliland

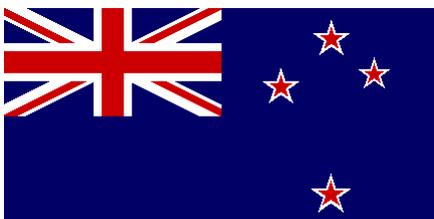


Size of the Badge



The badge on both ensigns and on Union Jacks was placed inside a circle with a diameter that was four-ninths the length of the hoist of the flag. Those badges that were not circular were set in an imaginary circle of this size.

Straits Settlements



Some ensign badges never conformed to this restriction,

New Zealand



and since 1999 there has been no restriction on the size of any ensign badge.

Tristan da Cunha

White Discs

Those non-circular badges that were not clearly visible against the blue or red field of an ensign were placed upon a white disc of the specified diameter. In the Admiralty and Colonial Office flag books the pages showing colonial badges consisted of rows and columns of white circles onto which the badges were printed. As a result it was often thought that all badges that were not circular had to be set on a white disc. An unsuccessful attempt to resolve this misunderstanding was made in the early 1920s when the Admiralty, in consultation with the Colonial Office and relevant governor, stipulated which badges should be on a white disc and which should not.

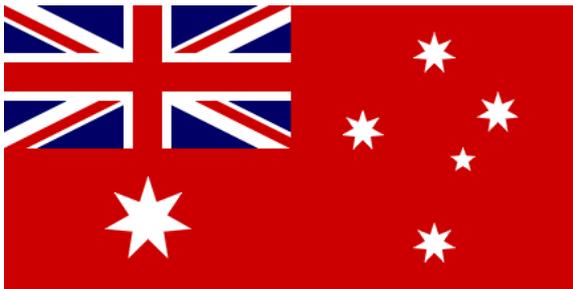
Red Ensigns

It was also often wrongly thought that there was a corresponding Red Ensign for every colonial Blue Ensign. A plain Red Ensign, as used by British merchant ships, was the proper ensign of any vessel registered in a British colony.



It was only in protectorates and mandated territories whose inhabitants were not British subjects and were not entitled to sail under the plain Red Ensign that, where necessary, a warrant was issued for a Red Ensign with the badge of the territory in the fly.

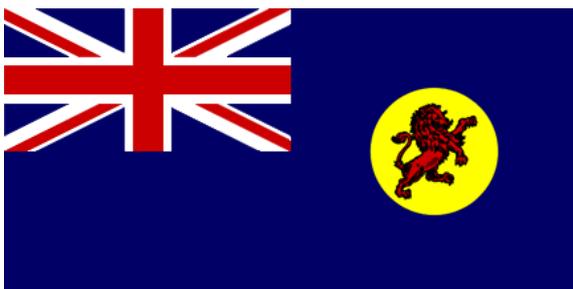
Cambay



Warrants were also issued for colonies which became self-governing Dominions.

Australia

Warrants



Blue Ensigns with a badge in the fly could be authorised by correspondence between the Admiralty, Colonial Office and relevant governor. Red Ensigns were regulated by Parliament through various Merchant Shipping Acts and required specific authorisation by Admiralty Warrant, as did Blue Ensigns of chartered companies.

British North Borneo Company

Flags on Land

The land flag of a colony was the Union Jack, but by the end of the 19th century defaced ensigns, usually red and often unauthorised, were being flown on land. The need for a distinctive flag at international sporting events also led to increasing use on land of colonial Blue Ensigns. The use of ensigns on land was also encouraged by the widespread belief that the Union Jack, which was always flown over Government House, was the flag of the governor and should not be flown by anyone else. In 1941, to encourage wider use of the Union Jack, the Colonial Office directed that the Union Jack with the colonial badge in its centre was the flag of the governor in all circumstances, and not solely for use when embarked.