

THE BADGE WORN ON THE COUNTY SHIRT



The Badge on the County Shirt and other items of clothing, is that of the Sussex Martlets.

In English heraldry the Martlet is a mythical birds that never lands, with short tufts of feathers in place of legs and feet.

Swifts, formerly known as Martlets, have such small legs that they were believed to have none while the Sooty Tern spend years in continuous flight, which lends credence to the legend of the legless Martlet.

The six Martlets on the Sussex flag [a design which dates from at least the 17th century], represent the six Rapes that divide the County.

Although the origin of the Sussex Rapes is not known [they possibly represent the shires of the ancient Anglo Saxon kingdom of Sussex] their function after 1066 is clearly as administrative and fiscal units.

At the time of the Norman Conquest there were four rapes: Arundel, Lewes, Pevensey and Hastings. By the time of the Domesday Book, William the Conqueror had created the rape of Bramber out of parts of the Arundel and Lewes rapes then, between 1250 and 1262, the rape of Chichester was created from the western half of Arundel rape. Since then Sussex has been divided into Chichester, Arundel, Bramber, Lewes, Pevensey and Hastings rapes.

Under the Normans each rape was centred on a castle. Arundel, Bramber and Lewes overlooked the rivers Arun, Adur and Ouse, while those at Chichester, Hastings and Pevensey overlooked the coast. These castles formed a network of strongholds which, as well as deterring insurgency and preventing invasion, also acted as regional administrative centres.

