

Bassett Heraldry

A Brief Introduction by James R. Terzian

Bassett families in the British Isles and northern France began to adopt Coats of Arms between 1190 and 1232 (the surname Basset does not appear elsewhere until several centuries later). Though many knew they were related by blood, the families chose a mix of related and unrelated heraldic designs, ensigns that have evolved and become more varied over time.

The arms borne by Bassets fall into at least nine distinct groups. The following is a brief summary of the arms and the families known by them:



“The Basset Arms” *Barry wavy Or and Gules.* Attributed to **Ralph** Basset the Justiciar, contemporary and close friend of Geoffrey Ridel (both were noble servants of Henry I). Borne by the Bassets of Heddington and of Wycombe in the Angevin period (ostensive cousins of **Ralph**). Readopted by the Bassetts of Umberleigh and of Tehidy just before the English Civil War, who continue to bear them today.



“The Ridel Arms” *Or, three piles Gules (points to center base).* Attributed to Geoffrey Ridel, and borne with differences by the descendants of his two older grandsons through his daughter Maud and Ralph’s son Sir Richard Basset, the Ridels of Great Weldon and the Bassets of Drayton (and cadets). Many other **Bassett** branches adopted variations on these arms in the 14th through 16th centuries.



Basset of Sapcote *Barry wavy Argent and Sable.* Attributed to William Basset of Sapcote, third son of Maud Ridel and Sir Richard Basset, and borne by William’s senior and cadet lines into the 14th century.



Bassett of Blore *Or, three piles Gules, on a canton Argent a griffin seagreant Sable.* Adopted by the junior-most of the Sapcote cadet lines after the Bassetts of Blore inherited representation and the lands of most other Sapcote cadet lines. This family’s arms are typical of many **Bassett** branches that adopted variations on the Ridel coat in the 14th and 15th centuries, whether descended from Geoffrey Ridel or not. (The Bassetts of Hints are a cadet branch of Blore.)



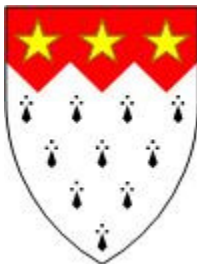
Bassett of Fledborough Hall Or, on three pales (palewise) three hunting horns stringed Or, a chief Vaire. Thought to be a cadet branch of Sapcote that lost connection to the rest of the family, the Bassetts of Fledborough existed prior to the Civil War. At this time they bore the Ridel coat with a canton Vairé of Argent and Sable. Like so many others they had to sell their estates during the Protectorate. A century later a branch of Bassetts emerged with a new estate called Fledborough Hall claiming to be this family. Unable to prove to the satisfaction of the College of Arms that they were the re-established line, these Bassetts were granted new arms.



Basset of Ipsden Dancettée Argent and Sable. Borne by the descendants of Osmund Basset who held Ipsden, other lands in Oxfordshire and lands in Gloucestershire. The senior line became the Bassetts of Tehidy and of Umberleigh.



Basset of Northumberland Argent, two bars Azure and in chief three chaplets Gules. Borne by a line that might have descended from Osmund Basset, and about whom (after the 14th century) little if anything is known. Members of this line may have fought with the Lancastrians in the Wars of the Roses.



Basset of Gloucestershire Ermine, on a chief Gules three mullets Or. Borne by a line that also might have descended from Osmund Basset and which held lands in Gloucestershire, but which today would have very different Y Chromosome DNA. Two sons took part in the siege of Carlaverock, and their arms are described in that poem. The line continued into the 18th century. Descendants in cadet lines may still exist.



Bassett of Beaupré Argent, a chevron between three hunting horns stringed Sable. Borne by a line that family legend says descended from Osmund Basset's grandson. The Bassetts of Beaupré and their many cadet branches are part of the Advenæ that took over southern Wales.

Most Basset families that were armigerous prior to the English Civil War are thought to have living descendants who can bear their Coats of Arms today. To learn more of these families,

what contemporary documents, genealogy and genetics can tell us about them, and who might bear these arms today, attend the talk on [Bassett](#) Heraldry and Early Basset History at the 2007 [Bassett](#) Family Reunion.

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