

Order of the Fleur de Lys

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The **Order of the Fleur de Lys** was formed in 1439 by Rene d'Anjou from a group of Scottish Knights and Men-at-Arms, who had come to France to fight the English during the Hundred Years War.

The Scots had fought throughout the conflict at a level surprising regarding the size of their nation. Victorious at the Battle of Baugé and defeated at the Verneuil, *La Grande Armée Écossaise* had formed a major part of the Franco-Scottish war machine during the early 15thc. Many of their senior leaders becoming Peers of France, and holding high offices of state, such as the Earl of Buchan and the Earl of Douglas, who were made High Constable of France and Duke of Touraine respectively.

The Scots wore the Fleur-de-Lys on their left breast to show their allegiance to France. They fought with Joan of Arc and Rene d'Anjou at Orleans. From this group there eventually emerged a number of companies of fighters both private and official, The Scots Guards ('Garde du Roi & Garde de Corps du Roi'), The Gendarmes Ecossais, the *Compagnie des Gentilhommes Ecossais* and also the '**Ordre du Lys**'.

In 1439 Rene granted the order a badge of *a cross fleury charged with a single Fleur de Lys*. The Order remained a Mercenary Order and fighting force until approximately 1780 when the remaining troops were absorbed into the British or Swedish Armies, the order becoming a charitable organization looking after the Widows and Orphans of members. In about 1840 the Earl of Eglington, then Sovereign Grand Commander, rewrote the statutes transforming the order into a private Order of Chivalry which it remains.

Man-at-arms

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This article is about the medieval term for a soldier. For the Masters of the Universe character, see Man-At-Arms.

Man-at-arms (or sometimes **armsman**) was a medieval term for a soldier, almost always a professional. It was most often used to refer to men in a knight's or Lord's retinue who were well-equipped and well-trained (deriving from having men *under*

arms—meaning to be trained in the use of arms). Terms *knight* and *man-at-arms* are often used interchangeably, but while all knights certainly were men-at-arms, not all men-at-arms were knights.



Due to the military hierarchy of medieval Europe, and the importance of the knight in the European Feudal system, professional soldiers were of great importance and social significance. The military equipment of the time was highly expensive, and high-quality wargear such as a mail hauberk represented a huge investment. Therefore a professional soldier who wore full metal gear to battle (including a helm and coif) was a representation of wealth and status. The more well equipped men a knight had in his retinue, the better his local standing. Due to the endemic in-fighting and civil disruptions of the 12th–14th Centuries, in the Hundred Years' War and across the borderlands of Scotland and Wales, military status was incredibly important, and could assure the survival of some families.

The next "step up" in the military hierarchy from the man-at-arms was the serjeant, a man of lesser rank and wealth to a knight, but with comparable equipment and training. Although the social structure of the Norman society of England was generally static, the easiest manner for a man to attain social rank and improve his standing was through military service, as the Norman states, unlike the Germanic ones, believed in knighting men of common birth who demonstrated nobility and courage on the field. Although this was rare, it was known, and therefore some men-at-arms would advance socially to the status of serjeants, and possibly knights if they performed a great notable deed and

received reward. The knighting of squires and men-at-arms was sometimes done in an ignoble manner, simply to increase the number of knights within an army (such practice was common during the Hundred Year's War).

The term was used during the Hundred Years' War to refer to men not of the higher order, who fought either on horseback or on foot with swords and armour. A knight was technically a man-at-arms, but a man-at-arms was not a knight. In this way it was understood that a "man-at-arms" was a man of the higher echelon of the military scale, but neither of noble birth nor a knight himself. By this time, the term was only ever used to refer to professional soldiers, usually of a distinctly higher order than archers or Billmen and serving in roughly the same tactical role as knights, differing only in legal and social status. The term was phased out during the 16th century.

When used in allusion to a professional soldier in a regular army, the term is an honorary denotation and could be considered unusual usage.

In some countries, such as France, the men-at-arms (*gens d'armes*) became a paramilitary with police duties.

There, a military corps having such duties was first created in 1337 and was placed under the orders of the Constable of France (*connétable*), and therefore named *connétablie*. In 1626 after the abolition of the title of *connétable*, it was put under the command of the *Maréchal of France*, and renamed *Maréchaussée*. Its main mission was protecting the roads from highwaymen.

The *gens d'armes* were originally heavy cavalry in the king's household, the equivalent of the "Honourable Corps of Gentlemen at Arms". In 1720 the *maréchaussée* was subordinated to the gendarmerie; after the French Revolution the *maréchaussée* was abolished and the gendarmerie took over its duties in 1791.

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