

**OBSCURE BRITISH FLAGS**  
**SO MANY TO CHOOSE FROM!**

*Graham Bartram*

The hardest part of preparing this talk was choosing which flags to feature. As the UK Ministry of Defence consultant on flags I probably come across more flag designs than anyone else in the UK. I don't just deal with British flags but the national naval and head of state flags of all the countries in the world we might have dealings with, which is all of them.

To give you an idea of the scale the latest edition of BR20 features 1342 different flag designs, of which a mere 431 are British. Here is the list of British flags:

- Union Flag & Naval Jack
- Civil Ensign "Red Duster"
- Civil Jack
- Government / Naval Reserve Ensign
- Naval Ensign "White Ensign"
- Royal Fleet Auxiliary Ensign
- Royal Fleet Auxiliary Jack
- HM Coastguard Ensign
- HM Revenue & Customs Ensign
- Royal Air Force Ensign
- Civil Air Ensign
- England "St. George's Cross"
- Scotland "St. Andrew's Saltire"
- Wales "The Red Dragon"
- Northern Ireland (unofficial)
- St. David's Cross
- St. Patrick's Cross
- Union Pennant (or vimpel)
- England Pennant (or vimpel)
- Scotland Pennant (or vimpel)
- Wales Pennant (or vimpel)
- Cornwall "St. Pirran's Cross"
- Royal Standard of HM The Queen
- Royal Standard for use in Scotland
- Personal Flag of HM The Queen
- Ancient Scottish Royal Standard, Scottish First Minister, Scottish Lord Lieutenant, Lord High Commissioner, Lord Lyon
- Standard of HRH The Duke of Edinburgh
- Standard of HRH The Prince of Wales
- Standard of HRH The Prince of Wales for use in Wales
- Standard of HRH The Duke of Rothesay for use in Scotland
- Standard of HRH The Prince of Wales as Duke of Cornwall
- Standard of Prince William of Wales
- Standard of Prince Harry of Wales
- Standard of HRH The Duke of York
- Standard of HRH The Duke of York in Scotland
- Standard of HRH The Earl of Wessex
- Standard of HRH The Earl of Wessex in Scotland

- Standard of HRH The Princess Royal
- Standard of HRH The Princess Royal in Scotland
- Standard of HRH The Duke of Kent
- Standard of HRH Prince Michael of Kent
- Standard of HRH Princess Alexandra
- Standard of HRH The Duke of Gloucester
- The Other Members' Standard
- Duchy of Lancaster
- The Royal Arms for use in England, Wales and Northern Ireland
- The Royal Arms as used by HM Government
- The Royal Arms for use in Scotland
- The Royal Arms as used by the Scottish Executive and HM Government in Scotland
- The Royal Cypher for use in England, Wales and Northern Ireland
- The Royal Cypher for use in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (simplified)
- The Royal Cypher for use in Scotland
- The Royal Cypher for use in Scotland (simplified)
- The Badge of the Heir Apparent
- Ministry of Defence
- Joint Services Flag
- Secretary of State for Defence
- Chief of the Defence Staff
- Unified Commander in Chief
- Unified Commander (3 Star)
- Unified Commander (2 Star)
- Unified Commander (1 Star)
- Ministry of Defence Police Ensign
- British Forces Falkland Islands
- Lord High Admiral
- Admiralty Board
- Navy Board
- Admiral of the Fleet (5 Star)
- Admiral (4 Star)
- Vice Admiral (3 Star)
- Rear Admiral (2 Star)
- Commodore RN (1 Star)
- Commodore RNR (1 Star)
- Commodore RFA (1 Star)
- Squadron Command Pennant
- Senior Officer Afloat
- Masthead Pennant
- Queen's Harbour Master
- Fishery Protection Pennant
- Commodore of a Convoy
- Special Boat Service
- Royal Naval Supply and Transport Service
- Royal Maritime Auxiliary Ensign
- Royal Maritime Auxiliary Jack
- Government Service Ensign
- Government Service Jack
- Red Disc - Alert and Salute Only (officer entitled to a flag)

- Blue Disc - Alert and Salute Only (officer not entitled to a flag)-
- White Disc - Courtesy Salute Only
- HRH The Duke of Edinburgh's Plate
- HRH The Prince of Wales' Plate
- Royal Family Members' Plate
- Commandant-General Royal Marines
- General and Lieutenant-General Royal Marines (4 and 3 Star)
- Major-General Royal Marines (2 Star)
- Brigadier Royal Marines (1 Star)
- Headquarters Royal Marines and Corps Flag
- HQ 3 Commando Brigade Royal Marines
- 3 Commando Brigade Royal Marines Pennant
- 40 Commando Royal Marines
- 42 Commando Royal Marines
- 45 Commando Royal Marines
- Commando Training Centre Royal Marines
- Logistics Regiment Royal Marines
- Amphibious Trials and Training Unit Royal Marines
- Signals Squadron Royal Marines
- Royal Marines School of Music
- Commando Helicopter Force Royal Marines
- 539 Assault Squadron Royal Marines
- Fleet Protection Group Royal Marines
- Royal Marines Reserve City of London
- Royal Marines Reserve Bristol
- Royal Marines Reserve Merseyside
- Royal Marines Reserve Scotland
- Royal Marines Reserve Tyne
- Royal Marines Poole
- 539 Assault Squadron Royal Marines Pennant
- Army Flag (non-ceremonial)
- Chief of the General Staff
- British Army Union Flag, Field Marshal, Commander-in-Chief Forces in the Field
- General Officer Afloat (ie. on board a ship)
- Army Ensign (worn by vessels commanded by commissioned officer)
- Army Ensign (worn by all other Army vessels)
- Military Attaché
- Military Members of the Army Board
- General Officer, Commander-in-Chief or Commanding a Command
- Senior Staff Officer on the Staff of the Commander-in-Chief
- Commander of a Corps
- Divisional Commander
- District Commander
- Brigade Commander
- Area and Sub District Commander
- Line of Communication Area
- Line of Communication Subarea
- Master Gunner St James' Park
- Deputy Constable of Dover Castle
- Master General of the Ordnance

- Household Division Camp Flag
- Royal Armoured Corps Camp Flag
- Royal Regiment of Artillery Camp Flag
- Corps of Royal Engineers Camp Flag
- The Royal Logistic Corps Camp Flag
- Corps of Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers Camp Flag
- Army Air Corps Camp Flag
- Adjutant General's Corps Camp Flag
- Royal Corps of Signals Camp Flag
- Intelligence Corps Camp Flag
- Royal Army Chaplains' Department Camp Flag
- 1st The Queen's Dragoon Guards Camp Flag
- The Royal Irish Regiment Camp Flag
- The Royal Welch Fusiliers Camp Flag
- The Parachute Regiment Camp Flag
- The Royal Gurkha Rifles Camp Flag
- Royal Logistics Corp Pennant
- Military Police Service (AGC)
- Royal Engineers
- Telegraph Office
- Marshal of the Royal Air Force (5 Star)
- Air Chief Marshal (4 Star)
- Air Marshal (3 Star)
- Air Vice Marshal (2 Star)
- Air Commodore (1 Star)
- Group Captain
- Wing Commander
- Squadron Leader (in this case of No. 12 Squadron)
- Chief of the Air Staff, Air Attachés & Advisers, Heads of RAF Missions
- RAF Members of the Air Force Board
- Air Officers Commanding-in-Chief (Commands in the UK)
- Air Officers Commanding, Commandant-General of the RAF Regiment
- Station Commanders
- RAF Cranwell
- RAF Marine Vessel Ensign
- United Kingdom Air Forces (NATO)
- Training Aircraft Roundel
- Non-combat Aircraft Roundel
- Non-combat Aircraft Fin Flash
- Combat Aircraft Roundel
- Combat Aircraft Fin Flash
- Low-visibility Aircraft Roundel
- Low-visibility Aircraft Fin Flash
- Sea Cadet Corps
- Army Cadet Force
- Air Training Corps
- Combined Cadet Force
- Naval Section Combined Cadet Force
- The Queen's Colour of The Royal Navy
- The Queen's Colour of 40 Commando, The Royal Marines

- The Regimental Colour of 40 Commando, The Royal Marines
- The Sovereign's Standard of The Blues and Royals
- The Cavalry Guidon of The Blues and Royals
- The Company Colour of No.1 Coy., 1st Battalion, Irish Guards
- The Queen's Colour of 1st Battalion, The Black Watch
- The Regimental Colour of 1st Battalion, The Black Watch
- The Queen's Colour for the Royal Air Force in the UK
- The Squadron Standard of No.32 (The Royal) Squadron, RAF
- National Standard of The Royal British Legion
- National Standard of The Royal Naval Association
- National Standard of The Royal Air Forces' Association
- National Standard of The British Korean Veterans Association
- Governor, Lieutenant Governor, Commissioner or Officer administering a government
- Diplomatic Officer, including an Ambassador
- Consular Officer
- Consular Officer Afloat
- Lord Lieutenant of a County
- High Sheriffs (England and Wales)
- HM Revenue & Customs Commissioners' Pennant
- Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
- Department of Trade and Industry
- Department for Transport
- Scottish Executive Department for Rural Affairs
- Environment Agency
- Forestry Commission
- Royal National Lifeboat Institute (RNLI) House Flag
- RNLI Ensign
- RNLI Member
- Trinity House Jack & House Flag
- Master of Trinity House (HRH The Duke of Edinburgh)
- Deputy Master of Trinity House
- Trinity House Ensign
- Northern Lights Ensign
- Northern Lights Commissioners' Flag (uses pre-1801 Union Flag)
- Northern Lights Commissioner's Pennant
- Irish Lights Ensign
- Irish Lights Commissioners' Flag
- Lloyd's of London Ensign
- Marine Society Ensign
- Maritime Volunteer Service Ensign
- Aberdeen Harbour Board Ensign
- Mersey Docks and Harbour Company Ensign
- Port of London Authority House Flag
- Port of London Authority Chairman
- Port of London Authority Vice Chairman
- Port of London Authority Ensign
- Eastern Sea Fisheries Ensign
- North Wales and North West Sea Fisheries Ensign
- South Wales Sea Fisheries Ensign

- Port of Dover
- Company of Watermen and Lightermen Ensign
- Metropolitan Police Flag
- Metropolitan Police Ensign
- Police Service of Northern Ireland Flag
- Fire Service Ensign
- Red Cross
- St John Ambulance
- Venerable Order of St John
- National Trust
- National Trust for Scotland
- English Heritage
- Historic Scotland
- Cadw (Wales)
- Environment and Heritage Service (Northern Ireland)
- Flag Institute
- Cornwall
- Northumberland
- Orkney Islands
- Shetland Islands
- Belfast
- Cardiff
- Edinburgh
- City of London
- Lord Mayor of the City of London
- Cinque Ports
- Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports
- Archbishop of Canterbury, Primate of All England
- The Church of England (with Diocesan Arms in the canton)
- Diocese of York
- Westminster Abbey (A Royal Peculiar)
- The Church in Wales
- Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland
- The Church of Scotland
- Diocese of Brechin Scottish Episcopal Church
- Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster
- The Holy See (flown by Roman Catholic churches)
- The Salvation Army
- The Buddhist Flag
- The Dhvaja of the Hindus
- The Khanda Flag of the Sikhs
- Boys' Brigade Queen's Colour
- Boys' Brigade Company Ensign
- Boys' Brigade St Andrew's Colour
- Girls' Brigade Company Colour
- World Scout Flag
- Explorer Scout Unit Flag
- Scout Troop Flag
- Cub Pack Flag
- Beaver Flag

- World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts-
- Girl Guide Company Flag
- Brownie Company Flag
- Sea Scout Ensign
- Sea Scout Burgee
- Queen's Award for Enterprise
- Queen's Award for Export Achievement
- Queen's Award for Technological Achievement
- Queen's Award for Environmental Achievement
- Queen's Anniversary Prize
- Royal Yacht Squadron Burgee
- Royal Albert Yacht Club Burgee
- Royal Cinque Ports Yacht Club Burgee
- Royal Cruising Club Burgee
- Royal Dorset Yacht Club Burgee
- Royal Engineer Yacht Club Burgee
- Royal Gourock Yacht Club Burgee
- Royal Highland Yacht Club Burgee
- Royal Marines Sailing Club Burgee
- Royal Motor Yacht Club Burgee
- Royal Naval Sailing Association Burgee
- Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve Yacht Club Burgee
- Royal Northern and Clyde Yacht Club Burgee
- Royal Scottish Motor Yacht Club Burgee
- Royal Solent Yacht Club Burgee
- Royal Southern Yacht Club Burgee
- Royal Temple Yacht Club Burgee
- Royal Thames Yacht Club Burgee
- Royal Western Yacht Club (England) Burgee
- Royal Western Yacht Club (Scotland) Burgee
- Sussex Motor Yacht Club Burgee
- Aldeburgh Yacht Club Ensign
- Aldeburgh Yacht Club Burgee
- Army Sailing Association Ensign
- Army Sailing Association Burgee
- Bar Yacht Club Ensign
- Bar Yacht Club Burgee
- City Livery Yacht Club Ensign
- City Livery Yacht Club Burgee
- Conway Club Cruising Association Ensign
- Conway Club Cruising Association Burgee
- The Cruising Association Ensign
- The Cruising Association Burgee
- The House of Lords Yacht Club Ensign
- The House of Lords Yacht Club Burgee
- Household Division Yacht Club Ensign
- Household Division Yacht Club Burgee
- Little Ship Club Ensign
- Little Ship Club Burgee
- Medway Cruising Club Ensign

- Medway Cruising Club Burgee
- The Medway Yacht Club Ensign
- The Medway Yacht Club Burgee
- Old Worcesters Yacht Club Ensign
- Old Worcesters Yacht Club Burgee
- Parkstone Yacht Club Ensign
- Parkstone Yacht Club Burgee
- Poole Harbour Yacht Club Ensign
- Poole Harbour Yacht Club Burgee
- Poole Yacht Club Ensign
- Poole Yacht Club Burgee
- Royal Air Force Yacht Club Ensign
- Royal Air Force Yacht Club Burgee
- Royal Anglesey Yacht Club Ensign
- Royal Anglesey Yacht Club Burgee
- Royal Armoured Corps Yacht Club Ensign
- Royal Armoured Corps Yacht Club Burgee
- Royal Artillery Yacht Club Ensign
- Royal Artillery Yacht Club Burgee
- Royal Bermuda Yacht Club Ensign
- Royal Bermuda Yacht Club Burgee
- Royal Burnham Yacht Club Ensign
- Royal Burnham Yacht Club Burgee
- Royal Channel Islands Yacht Club Ensign
- Royal Channel Islands Yacht Club Burgee
- Royal Corinthian Yacht Club Ensign
- Royal Corinthian Yacht Club Burgee
- Royal Cornwall Yacht Club Ensign
- Royal Cornwall Yacht Club Burgee
- Royal Dee Yacht Club Ensign
- Royal Dee Yacht Club Burgee
- Royal Forth Yacht Club Ensign
- Royal Forth Yacht Club Burgee
- Royal Gibraltar Yacht Club Ensign
- Royal Gibraltar Yacht Club Burgee
- Royal Harwich Yacht Club Ensign
- Royal Harwich Yacht Club Burgee
- Royal London Yacht Club Ensign
- Royal London Yacht Club Burgee
- Royal Mersey Yacht Club Ensign
- Royal Mersey Yacht Club Burgee
- Royal North of Ireland Yacht Club Ensign
- Royal North of Ireland Yacht Club Burgee
- Royal Northumberland Yacht Club Ensign
- Royal Northumberland Yacht Club Burgee
- Royal Ocean Racing Club Ensign
- Royal Ocean Racing Club Burgee
- Royal Plymouth Corinthian Yacht Club Ensign
- Royal Plymouth Corinthian Yacht Club Burgee
- Royal Southampton Yacht Club Ensign



- Royal Southampton Yacht Club Burgee
- Royal Torbay Yacht Club Ensign
- Royal Torbay Yacht Club Burgee
- Royal Ulster Yacht Club Ensign
- Royal Ulster Yacht Club Burgee
- Royal Welsh Yacht Club Ensign
- Royal Welsh Yacht Club Burgee
- Royal Yorkshire Yacht Club Ensign
- Royal Yorkshire Yacht Club Burgee
- Severn Motor Yacht Club Ensign
- Severn Motor Yacht Club Burgee
- Sussex Yacht Club Ensign
- Sussex Yacht Club Burgee
- Thames Motor Yacht Club Ensign
- Thames Motor Yacht Club Burgee
- Brixham Yacht Club Ensign
- Brixham Yacht Club Burgee
- House of Commons Yacht Club Ensign
- House of Commons Yacht Club Burgee
- Lloyd's Yacht Club Ensign
- Lloyd's Yacht Club Burgee
- Royal Dart Yacht Club Ensign
- Royal Dart Yacht Club Burgee
- Royal Fowey Yacht Club Ensign
- Royal Fowey Yacht Club Burgee
- Royal Hamilton Amateur Dinghy Club Ensign
- Royal Hamilton Amateur Dinghy Club Burgee
- Royal Lymington Yacht Club Ensign
- Royal Lymington Yacht Club Burgee
- Royal Norfolk and Suffolk Yacht Club Ensign
- Royal Norfolk and Suffolk Yacht Club Burgee
- Royal Victoria Yacht Club Ensign
- Royal Victoria Yacht Club Burgee
- Royal Windermere Yacht Club Ensign
- Royal Windermere Yacht Club Burgee
- St. Helier Yacht Club Ensign
- St. Helier Yacht Club Burgee
- West Mersea Yacht Club Ensign
- West Mersea Yacht Club Burgee
- Royal Yachting Association Official Duty Ensign
- Royal Yachting Association Official Duty Burgee
- RYA Member (also used in burgee form)
- RAF Sailing Association Ensign
- RAF Sailing Association Burgee

This is by no means a complete list of current British flags. Despite flags now being a tri-service issue in the MoD we still don't have a comprehensive list of camp flags, and the list doesn't include anything other than a sample of ceremonial flags. Similarly the civic flags included are only a small sample.

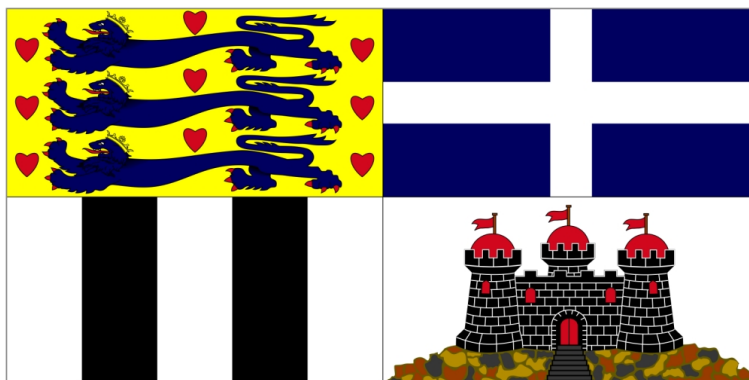
With so many flags to choose from, where to start? Well the top is always a good one, so the first of my obscure British flags is the Royal Standard, but not the one that flies over Buckingham Palace, the one that flies over the Palace of Holyrood House.



**The Royal Standard for use in Scotland**

There have always been Scottish versions of the Royal Arms since 1603, but until very recently the Kings and Queen used the normal Royal Standard when in Scotland. In 1998 HM The Queen decided to start using the Scottish Royal Arms as a standard. At the same time other members of the Royal Family were encouraged to matriculate Scottish versions of their own arms.

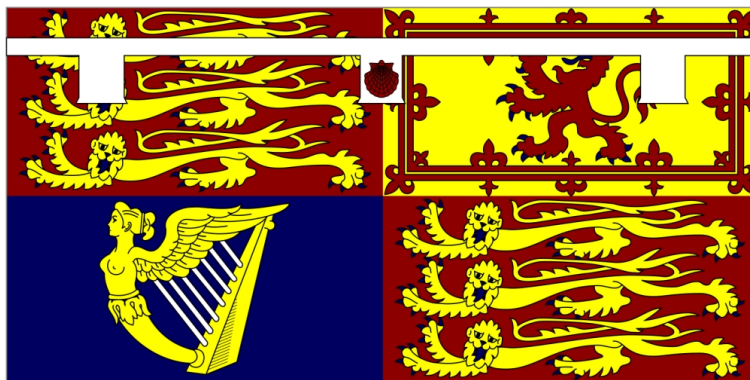
For my next flag I choose the second highest flag in the UK, which features the arms of two other countries, the personal standard of HRH The Duke of Edinburgh. It dates from 1947 when Prince Philip was created Duke of Edinburgh just prior to his wedding to HRH The Princess Elizabeth. It features the arms of Denmark, Greece, Mountbatten and Edinburgh.



**HRH The Duke of Edinburgh KG KT**

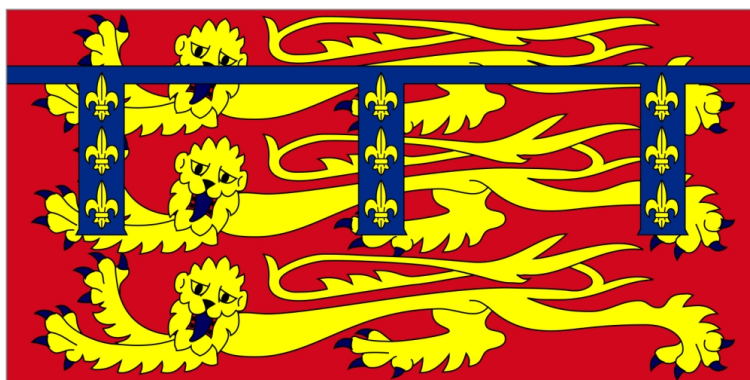
An associated standard to this has sometimes wrongly been attributed to the Duke, and that is the standard of HRH The Duchess of Edinburgh, which featured the Duke's arms at the hoist and her own defaced Royal Arms in the fly. This standard is recorded in the records of the College of Arms and I believe it was used on an official visit to Canada. This is the only example I have been able to find of a Princess having an impaled standard.

Now a new personal standard, that of HRH Prince William of Wales. This only started to be used this year when Prince William visited New Zealand. Fortunately I had created the artwork as soon as I knew what his arms were, as I only had a couple of days to supply the artwork to the manufacturer. The standard features the escallop from Diane's family arms as the differencing mark. It has three label points because he is second in line.



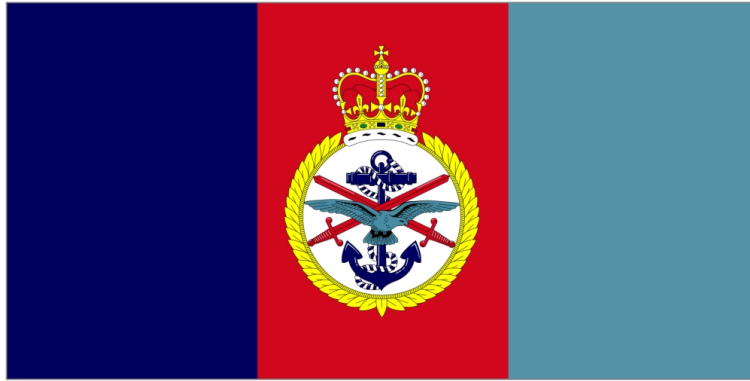
**HRH Prince William of Wales**

From the newest to the one of the oldest, the standard of the Duke or Duchy of Lancaster. This dates back to John of Gaunt (1340-1399). His differenced arms have remained unchanged as the flag of the Duchy since the duchy itself was incorporated into the Crown, when John's son Henry IV became king in 1399. He decreed that the Duchy should remain a distinct entity within the crown. Today the Duchy forms most of Her Majesty's personal estate and the revenues are handed over to the government in return for the civil list. The flag flies outside the Duchy's headquarters in the Savoy.



**Duchy of Lancaster**

Another recent flag is that of the Ministry of Defence. Until recently the only flag for the Ministry of Defence was the Joint Service Flag, but in 2001 the new MoD flag was introduced. This has the same basic design as the Joint Service Flag, three vertical stripes of navy, red and RAF blue but features the Ministry of Defence emblem in full colour in the centre.



**Ministry of Defence**

Originally created in 1956 and modified in 1964 when the MoD was created, with a Union flag added in the canton. In 1965 it was modified again when Lord Mountbatten KG was appointed Chief of the Defence staff and has remained ever since. This flag is the basis of the other Joint Service command flags.



**Chief of the Defence Staff**

Our current 1st Sea Lord, Admiral Sir Alan West, is keen on flags, and decided that it was time that the Admiralty Board, of which he is head, should have a flag. It was duly designed by the College of Arms in 2003. Sir Alan also decided that the distinguishing flag for the 1st Sea Lord and the Chief of the Defence Staff (if RN) should be the Union flag, just as for an Admiral of the Fleet.