

The Jan Raneke Archive of Coats of Arms in Medieval Europe

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Summary

In the 1950–70s the heraldic artist and scholar Jan Raneke catalogued and systemised more than ten thousand medieval coats of arms. The arms were documented in index cards with hand painted shields and several text fields. The Swedish Heraldry Society is running a project to digitize and make this unique material available to a broader audience.

Introduction

Jan Raneke (1914–2007), Dr,¹ A.I.H.,² was a heraldic scholar³ and artist,⁴ active in a number of heraldic associations and institutions.⁵ In the late 1950s he started cataloguing and systemising medieval coats of arms, first from the Scania province, then from all of Sweden and the Nordic countries and eventually from all of Europe. The arms were documented in index cards, with a hand painted shield and text fields for e.g. name, place, time, comments and citation of the source. He used two variants of needle cards⁶ kept in boxes and ordinary index cards kept in plastic pockets in ring binders. Most of the archive was created in the 1960s, in Jan's leisure time.⁷

I believe it is safe to say that cataloguing and systemising was a recurring theme in Jan Raneke's scholarly endeavours in heraldry. He quit his daytime job in 1969 and then studied at Lund University and worked on his doctoral thesis on medieval heraldry, which he defended in 1975. His thesis includes an extensive statistical study of the more than 3000 coats of arms in the armorial he worked with.⁸ Dr Raneke went on to create his monumental work about Swedish medieval coats of arms, published in three volumes 1982–1985.⁹ His ambition was to catalogue and systemise all known Swedish medieval coats of arms and this work clearly builds on and

¹ He held a Doctorate in Art History at Lund University on the thesis *Bergshammarsvapenboken, en medeltidsheraldisk studie* [The Bergshammar Armorial – a study in medieval heraldry] (Raneke 1975).

² He was elected to chair number 10 of *L'Académie Internationale d'Héraldique* in 1991.

³ For a bibliography up until 2001, refer to Hermfelt 2001.

⁴ Many of his artistic works have been presented in the roll of arms periodical *Skandinavisk vapenrulla* (1963–).

⁵ E.g. *Societas Heraldica Scandinavica*, in particular the local branch *Societas Heraldica Scania*, The Scandinavian Roll of Arms periodical, The Swedish Heraldry Society, The Swedish National Committee of Genealogy and Heraldry.

⁶ Needle cards are also known as edge-notched cards. They have pre-punched holes along the sides, where a hole can be cut out to indicate that the card belongs to an associated category. Using a long needle, a collection of cards can be probed and sorted by addressing the different holes. Lifting the cards, the ones that are left are the ones that have the holes cut out and thus belong to the designated category.

⁷ Advertising manager was his daytime job.

⁸ Raneke 1975, pp. 101–162.

⁹ Raneke 1982–1985.


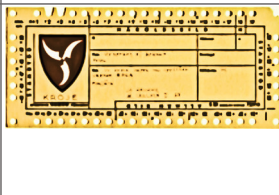

extends the principles he developed and used in his work with the archive.¹⁰ A couple of years later he is the editor and illustrator of a glossary of heraldic terminology in the Nordic languages.¹¹ Jan also arranged illustrations of the coats of arms of the Swedish nobility,¹² again systemised according to the scheme used in Raneke 1982–1985 and derived from the work with the archive.¹³

This unique archive, with both scholarly and artistic value, deserves a wide audience and the Swedish Heraldry Society in co-operation with the Raneke family and the Lund University Library¹⁴ is working to preserve and make it generally available. The work is ongoing to digitize the archive and the ambition is to eventually make it available online. The aim of this paper is to provide an introduction and overview to the archive and the project concerning it.

Description of the Archive

The material in the archive has been divided in three parts according to the kind of index cards used: Archival holdings A, B and C, see overview in Table 1.

Table 1. Overview of the archival holdings.

Archival holding	Description	Format	Number of cards	Relative size comparison
A	Large needle cards in alphabetical order in boxes. Complete coats of arms, both hand drawn and cut-and-paste pictures. Created late 1950s.	Card: 147×102 mm Picture area: 52×75 mm	Ca 1600	
B	Slim needle cards geographically ordered in boxes. Also plain white cards without punched holes. Arms hand drawn in a shield template. Ca 1960.	Card: 148×65 mm Shield: 25×30 mm	Ca 2800, whereof ca 2100 proper needle cards and ca 700 plain cards	
C	Index cards in plastic pockets in binders, geographical and thematic order. Arms hand drawn in a shield template. 1960/70s.	Card: 118×51 mm Shield: 25×30 mm	8762, plus ca 600 in boxes, whereof many are similar to the cards in the binders	

¹⁰ He did not publish the material in the archive as such. He regarded it as a project to “deepen his knowledge” and used it as a reference asset for his own work. – Private conversation with Jan Raneke (2007).

¹¹ Raneke 1987.

¹² The illustrations are from Klingspor 1886–1890.

¹³ Raneke 1990.

¹⁴ The archive of coats of arms has been donated to the Lund University Library by the Raneke family. In his last year Jan Raneke raised the question about his heraldic estate and after discussions with friends and family and feedback from potential receiving institutions he favoured the Lund University Library.

Archival holding A is the smallest part of the collection, ca 1600 cards,¹⁵ but with the largest cards,¹⁶ almost twice as big as the other two variants. Unlike B and C, holding A contains not only hand drawn coats of arms¹⁷ but also cut-and-paste pictures,¹⁸ often hand coloured. Also, most cards in holding A show full achievements, with shield, helmet, crest and mantling, whereas holdings B and C only show the shield. The cut-out notches make the material searchable and sortable according to name in alphabetic order, basic contents of the shield and geographical origin according to a set of regions in Europe. Holding A is arranged in alphabetical order in three large boxes.¹⁹ In the third box there are also a small number of thin ring-binder pages²⁰ with printed coats of arms templates (two variants) and dedicated entries for place of origin and first appearance. These are filled out with pencil. My assumption is that this represents a precursor to the needle cards.



Fig. 1. Archival holding A.

Archival holding B consists of ca 2800 cards in total,²¹ where approximately 2100 are needle cards, of a Sorto model²² roughly the same length as the cards in A but only $\frac{2}{3}$ as high. Apart from the proper needle cards, this collection also contains ca 700 cards without punched holes,

¹⁵ This is an approximation of the number of cards derived by measuring the thickness of the groups of cards in the boxes and comparing to a reference selection where the cards for a particular set have been counted to give a number of cards per mm measure. The same method has been applied to all parts of the archive, except holding C where each card is part of a sequentially numbered series.

¹⁶ Needle card Sorto 612 Esselte System 422839.

¹⁷ Jan appears to have used several different templates to draw the arms in.

¹⁸ E.g. taken from Herman B. Storck: *Dansk Vaabenbog* (1910).

¹⁹ Labelled 1, 2 and 3.

²⁰ Format 90×150 mm, 6-holes.

²¹ Holding B is described in Raneke 1960. However, please note that the description of the geographical coverage of the cards and the size of the collection in that paper appears to include both holding A and B and possibly also the directory of cut-and-paste English coats of arms (see p. 445), even if all illustrations show only cards from B and there is no mention of more than one kind of card.

²² Needle card Sorto 30 Esselte System 722910.



Fig. 2. Examples of cards in archival holding A.

some printed with the same appearance as the Sorto cards and some simply blank cards of the same dimensions. The contents of these other cards span from very scant sketches or notes to well specified cards, similar to the needle cards in scope. In holding B as well as in C the cards have a shield template, 25×30 mm, and all arms are hand drawn. The cards are arranged in geographical order in six boxes.²³ The geographical coverage varies hugely, with only a few cards in some regions and hundreds in others. Also, some regions are represented in more than one box.



Fig. 3. Archival holding B.

²³ Labelled "England" [England], "England, Skottland" [England, Scotland], "Östtyskt område södra delen" [East German territory south part], "Västtyskt område" [West German territory], "Thü, Tyskl." [Short for Thuringia, Germany] and "Frankrike" [France]. However, the content of the boxes does not correspond closely to these labels, e.g. there is only a handful of cards with Scottish arms in the box labelled "England, Skottland" but more than a hundred in the one labelled "Östtyskt område södra delen".

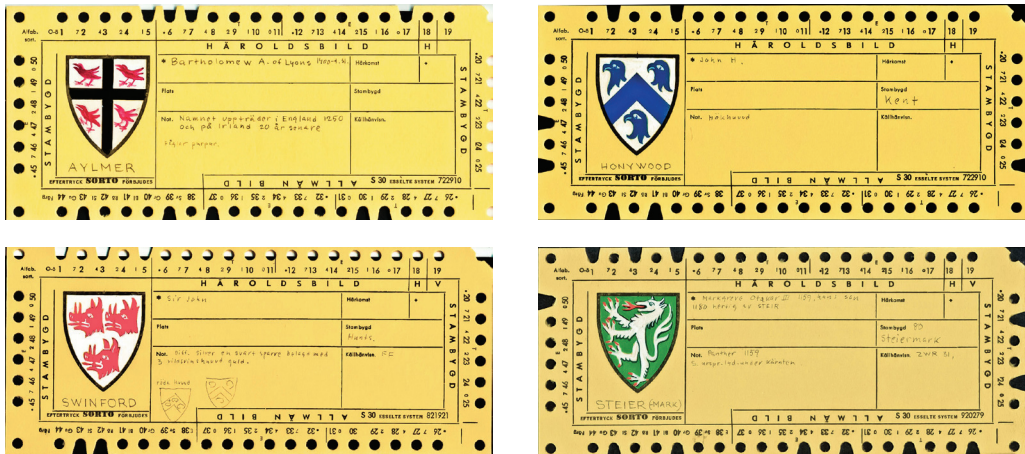


Fig. 4. Examples of needle cards in archival holding B.

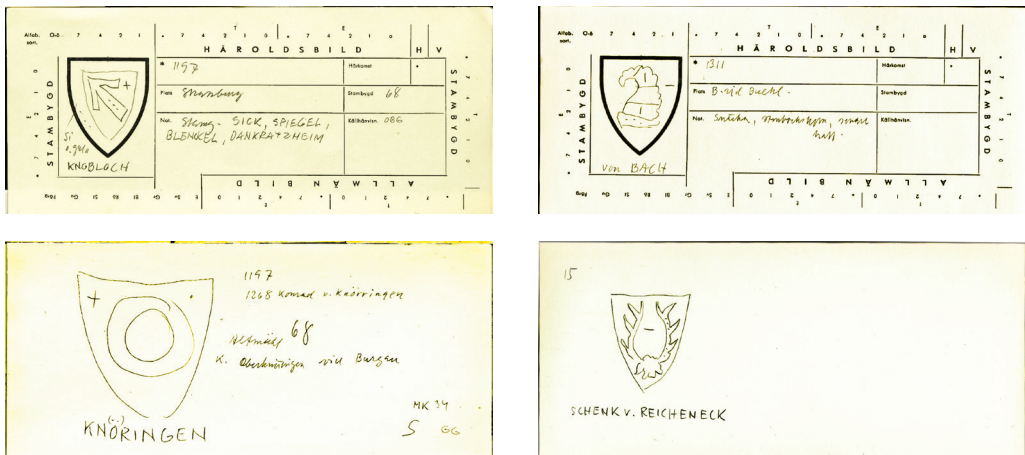


Fig. 5. Examples of cards of the non-needle card type in archival holding B.

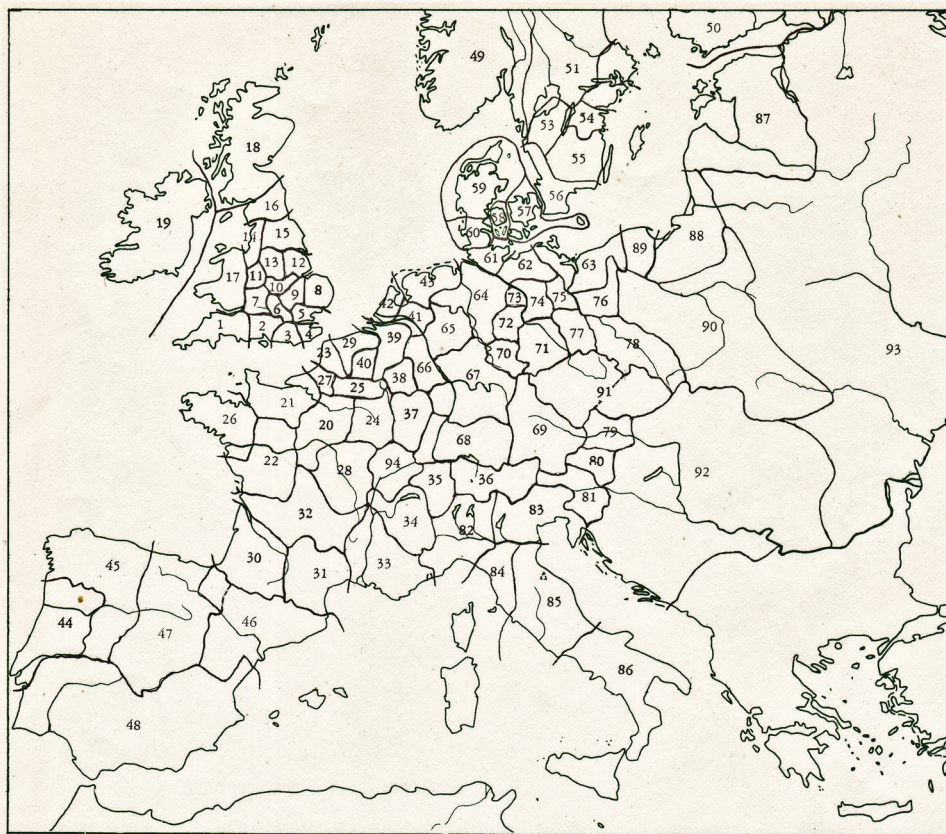
Jan Raneke had made a division of Europe into 94 heraldic regions²⁴ and in holding B as well as in C the geographical origin of the arms is often given in the form of a number that corresponds to this reference list of regions, see Fig. 6. In a similar way, he had created a list of abbreviations for literature references,²⁵ used in the references field on the cards.

Archival holding C is the largest and most complete part of the archive. It contains 8762 index cards collected in 1337 sheets of plastic pockets in 32 ring binders. The cards are not needle cards, but ordinary index cards of roughly the same size as the inner part of the cards in holding B.²⁶ All

²⁴ As far as I have been able to ascertain he did not use a ready model for this division but compiled it from his own studies and classification needs.

²⁵ E.g. "G = Gelre's Wapenboek (Edition Victor Bouton 1881)".

²⁶ 118x51 mm, as compared to 126x44 mm in B if removing the area of the cards used for the notches and associated labels.



1. Cornwall, Dev., Dor., Som.	25. Vermandois	49. Norge	73. Altmark
2. Wilts., Hamps., Hants., Berks.	26. Bretagne	50. Finland	74. Prignitz
3. Sussex, Surrey	27. Beauvais	51. Nordsverige	75. Mittelmark
4. Kent	28. Bourgogne	52. Uppland, Sörmland	76. Neumark
5. Essex	29. Flandern	53. Västergötland	77. Lausitz
6. Middles., Herts., Bucks., Oxon.	30. Gascogne	54. Östergötland	78. Schlesien
7. Hereford, Worcs., Gloucs.	31. Toulouse	55. Småland	79. Ostmark
8. Norfolk, Suffolk	32. Auvergne	56. Skåneland	80. Steiermark
9. Cambridges., Hunts., Bedf.	33. Provence	57. Själland	81. Kärnten
10. Warwicks, Norts., Rutland	34. Savoyen	58. Fyn, Langeland	82. Lombardiet
11. Schropsh., Staffs., Salop	35. Västschweiz	59. Nordjylland	83. Verona, Friaul
12. Lincolnshire	36. Östschweiz, Tyrolen	60. Syddjylland	84. Tuscien
13. Derby, Notts., Leics.	37. Lothringen	61. Holstein	85. Mellanitalien
14. Cheshire, Lancs., Westm.	38. Luxemburg	62. Mecklenburg	86. Sydtalien
15. Yorkshire	39. Brabant	63. Pommern	87. Baltikum
16. Northumb., Cumberl., Durham	40. Hainaut	64. Niedersachsen	88. Altpreussen
17. Wales	41. Geldern	65. Westfalen	89. Kassuben
18. Skottland	42. Holland	66. Rhenlandet	90. Polen
19. Irland	43. Frisland	67. Franken	91. Böhmen, Mähren
20. Ile de France, Berry	44. Portugal	68. Schwaben	92. Ungern
21. Normandie	45. Leon	69. Bayern	93. Ost-Sydstoeuropa
22. Poitou, Anjou	46. Aragon, Navarra	70. Thyringen	94. France Comté
23. Artois	47. Kastiljen	71. Meissen	95.
24. Champagne	48. Sydspanien	72. Anhalt	96.

Fig. 6. Jan Raneke's division of Europe into 94 heraldic regions.

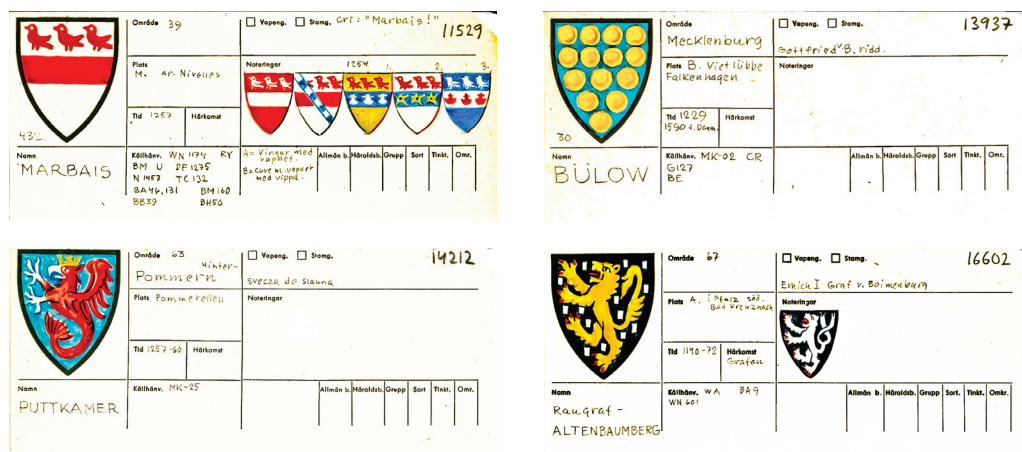


Fig. 7. Examples of cards in the binders in archival holding C.

arms are hand drawn in shield templates. Sometimes additional variants of the arms are drawn in the notes field on the cards. Crests are not drawn, but are in some cases described on the card. Holding C is organized both geographically and according to a classification of the arms. Each binder belongs to a designated heraldic region, see Table 2. Within each binder, or set of binders in the cases where one region spans several binders, the arms are arranged according to the classification system developed by Dr Raneke and shown in Fig. 8. In short, he lists 12 different groups of divisions and ordinaries and 12 groups of charges and then uses combinations of these to describe also more complicated arms.²⁷

Table 2. List of binders in holding C.

Binder No	Binder Name	#Cards	Binder No	Binder Name	#Cards
1	England–Wales	255	17	Lower Saxony	262
2–3	France 1–2	268	18–21	Westphalia 1–4	995
4	Lorraine	320	22–24	Rheinland 1–3	803
5–7	Brabant 1–3	875	25	Franconia	384
8	Geldern	218	26–27	Thuringia 1–2	735
9	Norway	454	28	Anhalt	348
10–12	Denmark 1–3	1002	29	Brandenburg	245
13	Holstein	292	30	Florence–Tuscany	267
14–15	Mecklenburg 1–2	451	31	Baltics	147
16	Pomerania	264	32	Poland–Eastern Europe	177

The archive also contains two boxes with ca 600 cards of the holding C type. They show coats of arms from Sweden and Finland in four categories:

²⁷ An evolved and further detailed version of the classification system is described and used in Raneke 1982–1985.

SCHEMA
för
VAPENKLASSIFICERING

HÄROLDsbilder		ALLMÄNNa bilder		
A		Delningar	a	Däggdjur
B		Klyvningar	b	Fåglar
C		Styckningar	c	Fiskar
D		Gaffelsnitt bottenar	d	Kräldjur Insekter
E		Rutning	e	Fäbeldjur
F		Spetsar	f	Växter
G		Spursnitt veckningar	g	Himmel Element
H		Kors	h	Kors
K		Tinnar	k	Föremål
L		Björningar	l	Rutor Blietter Ämgar m.m.
M		Rörelser Diverse	m	Mänskliga
N		H-komb.	n	A-komb.

KOMBINERADE

BILDER

A	a	b	c	d	e	f	E	a	b	c	d	e	f	K	a	b	c	d	e	f	n
B	a	b	c	d	e	f	F	a	b	c	d	e	f	L	a	b	c	d	e	f	n
C	a	b	c	d	e	f	G	a	b	c	d	e	f	M	a	b	c	d	e	f	n
D	a	b	c	d	e	f	H	a	b	c	d	e	f	N	a	b	c	d	e	f	n

Fig. 8. Jan Raneke's classification system for the coats of arms in the archive.

- (i) Cards that are well in line with the cards in the binders.
- (ii) Cards with arms and names, drawn and written in ink.²⁸
- (iii) Cards with arms, but many without name.
- (iv) Cards arranged alphabetically with names, but where many are without arms.

The first group could in principle have been arranged in an additional binder or perhaps two for Sweden–Finland. The other groups appear to be working material, cataloguing names and trying to associate arms with them (iv), trying to find names for arms of unknown provenance (iii) and perhaps putting in a firmer format the confirmed cases (ii). It is conceivable that all these cards constitute work in progress leading up to Raneke 1982–1985.²⁹ Category (ii) contains ca 100 cards, but the other categories are not clearly separated in the boxes and there is a grey area between the categories, making it difficult to estimate the numbers.

When comparing the geographical coverage of holdings B and C it can be concluded that the overlap is small, see Fig. 10. It appears that when setting up holding C Dr Raneke prioritized to cover new regions and did not start over re-doing all the work spent on holding B.

The figure shows four examples of cards from the holding C type in boxes, arranged in a 2x2 grid. Each card has a shield illustration, a name field, and various classification fields. The cards are examples of different categories (i)-(iv).

- Top-left card:** Shield with a blue eagle on a yellow field. Name: UGGLA. Classification: Öst. Västergötland. Nöterger: Gies Hansson Vapn. 1909. Tid: 1908-17. Håkonar: EA.
- Top-right card:** Shield with a red chevron on a white field. Name: två nedvända sparrar. Classification: Öst. Fin. Nöterger: Sung HÅKANSSON Vapn. Tid: 1950. Håkonar: Håkonar.
- Bottom-left card:** Shield with a red chevron on a white field. Name: . Håkonar: L.
- Bottom-right card:** Shield with a red chevron on a white field. Name: Mörby-ätten. Classification: Öst. Håkonar: GOU: 750,753. Tid: 1917.

Fig. 9. Examples of cards of the holding C type in boxes, of the different categories (i)–(iv).

²⁸ All other cards in the archive are drawn and written in pencil.

²⁹ In the archive, there are also three binders with plastic pockets holding cards arranged according to a classification system like that used in Raneke 1982–1985. The cards show shields that are copied or drawn and one or sometimes several names written on the card, but no other information. These binders appear to be closely related to the work with Raneke 1982–1985 and perhaps the work with the cards in the boxes was at some point abandoned in favor of the cards in these binders. The binders are labelled "Register 1", "Register 2" and "Register 3", i.e. index 1, 2 and 3.

In addition to archival holdings A, B and C, there are also two boxes with a directory of ca 2800 cut-and-paste English coats of arms. These have been cut out of an armorial,³⁰ pasted to thin paper notes and arranged in alphabetical order.

The Digitizing Procedure

The project to digitize the archive has had holding C as the first priority, both because it is the largest, most complete and well-ordered of the holdings, but also for preservation reasons. The plastic pockets in the binders are harmful to the index cards from a preservation point of view, making it important to transfer the cards to safe long term storage. Since the exact position of a card in a specific section of a particular binder carries information about the classification of the arms made by Dr Raneke, not recorded on the card as such, it has been important to preserve this information in the digitizing process. The digitizing of holding C has been performed in the following steps:

- (i) Scanning the contents of the binders sequentially.
- (ii) Removing the cards from the plastic pockets and numbering them sequentially.
- (iii) Scanning each individual card.

In the first step the binders were numbered and arranged in the order of their designated heraldic region, as listed in Table 2. Each binder was given a cover sheet with binder number, name and number of sheets of plastic pockets. The entire contents of each binder was then scanned sequentially and saved as a pdf³¹ that runs through the binder from beginning to end, including empty backsides and separator pages.³² The only things left out were completely empty plastic pockets and repeated duplicates of identical separator pages. In most cases the cards are clearly visible through the plastic pockets, but in some cases the plastic is wrinkled causing reflections that disturb the picture. Also, some plastic pockets show signs of other pictures having been kept in them leaving an imprint in the material.³³ After verifying that the binder pdf's were correct, the cards were taken out, given a serial number³⁴ and collected in custom made storage

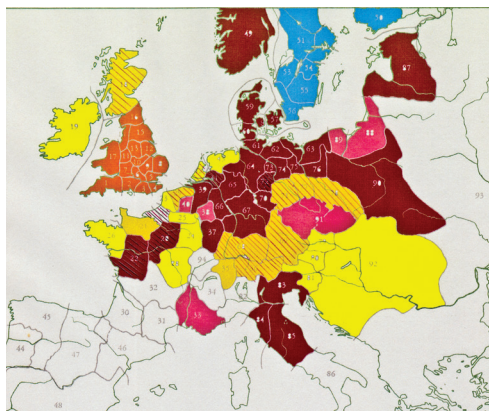


Fig. 10. Preliminary geographical coverage of holdings B and C. This picture is based on the estimates of the number of cards in the region-labelled compartments in holding B and an overview inventory of the regions covered by the cards in holding C. Holding B: Dark yellow: extensive coverage. Light yellow: some coverage. Holding C: Dark red: extensive coverage (designated binder). Light red: some coverage. Blue: covered by the cards of C type in boxes. Overlap between B and C: Orange: extensive coverage in both. Red stripes: some cards in C. Black stripes: some cards in B.

³⁰ Debrett's Peerage, Baronetage, Knightage and Companionage, probably an edition from the 1940s or 1950s. Possibly also other sources.

³¹ 300 dpi resolution. All digitizing work has been performed by Arkitektkopia in Malmö.

³² Jan used colored papers to separate the sheets of plastic pockets into different sections. Sometimes with a letter from the classification scheme in Fig. 8, sometimes left blank.

³³ Probably cards with photocopied images of shields.

³⁴ Starting with 10001 and going up to 18762, written in pencil in the upper right hand corner.



Fig. 11. Removing the cards in holding C from the binders and storing them in archive boxes.

boxes,³⁵ housing 1000 cards each in compartments of 100. Then all the 8762 cards were scanned individually.³⁶

Current Status and Next Steps

All cards in the binders in holding C have been digitized and this part of the archive is now securely stored in archive boxes. No cards remain in plastic pockets.

To complement the geographical coverage the current plan for the continued digitizing project is to scan holding B and the cards of C type that were not kept in binders. However,

this is not as straight forward as in the case of the binders in holding C. It is not obvious in what order to number the cards and where to draw the line between a card that should be included in the scope and a card that has so sketchy contents that it should perhaps be excluded. It is also more complicated to retain the information about the original placement of the cards, since no overview scan of the kind used for the binders is possible.

Acknowledgements

This project is run by the Swedish Heraldry Society in co-operation with the Raneke family and Lund University Library and with financial support of The Längmanska Cultural Foundation, The Swedish House of Nobility and The Memorial Foundation of Colonel Sten Lewenhaupt. I would also like to acknowledge the professionalism of Arkitektkopia in Malmö who has performed the digitizing work.

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³⁵ Customized Klug Conservation archive boxes, ordered from the Danish Royal Library.

³⁶ 600 dpi resolution. Each card saved as a separate pdf file named C10001.pdf to C18762.pdf.