

News

MIDDELBURG HERITAGE: This week in Middelburg's History

The Coat of Arms of the Municipality of Middelburg, Transvaal.

🕒 March 23, 2026



Soekie Rossouw

🕒 5 minutes read



📷 The coat of arms of the South African Republic and later of the Provincial Administration of the Transvaal.

This week, 122 years ago, on Thursday, March 31, 1904, the first City Council of Middelburg approved a Coat of Arms for the town of Middelburg.

The coat of arms contains several elements that also appeared in the Coat of Arms of the, at the time, Zuid-Afrikaanse Republiek.

Transvaal

The coat of arms was the official heraldic symbol of the Zuid-Afrikaanse Republiek from 1866 to 1877 and again from 1881 to 1902, and later, in a simplified form, the symbol of the Transvaal Province from 1954 to 1994.

History

The Zuid-A
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should have the following coat of arms.

- On the silver field, an ox wagon and a golden anchor should be placed, while an eagle rests on the coat of arms.
- On the right side of the coat of arms is a man in traditional dress with a gun and accessories.
- On the left, a lion.

The earliest known appearance of this coat of arms was on banknotes issued in 1866. The only crudely drawn coat of arms was depicted as a shield with a lion, an anchor and a man in the upper half, an ox wagon in the lower half, and the motto *Eendragt maakt magt* – meaning 'unity brings strength' – on a ribbon across the top. This version also appeared in the *Staatscourant* (government newspaper) from 1867.

A redesigned shield, featuring sections, an eagle perched above, and three flags draped on either side, debuted on postage stamps in 1869 and quickly became the favoured design. From 1871, it also appeared on banknotes and from 1872 it appeared on the main heading of the *Staatscourant*. In 1881, after the First War of Independence, the version was revived and again became obsolete when the Zuid-Afrikaanse Republiek ceased to exist in 1902 after the Anglo-Boer War.

In 1950, the Transvaal Provincial Administration decided to adopt the old coat of arms as the Provincial Coat of Arms and appointed Chief Archivist Dr Coenraad Beyers to investigate and report on the most suitable version. The coat of arms was reportedly adopted as the Provincial Coat of Arms in 1954, remaining in use until the province was dissolved in 1994.

The Coat of Arms of the Municipality of Middelburg, Transvaal – 1904 to 1994





Printed Representation of the Town Coat of Arms – note the colours. IMAGE: Supplied.

History

During a special meeting convened by the Middelburg City Council, it was decided that the town deserved a coat of arms. A reward of £10 (10 pounds) was offered for the person with the most suitable design.

Tenders were invited by the first City Council for designs for a coat of arms, and from the seven sketches received, the council selected the sketch of Mr Hugh J Scott, an architect, in Middelburg. A committee consisting of Councillors CP Allaart, J Campbell, and JJ Trichardt recommended minor alterations to the order of Scott's design. This was approved, and the town's coat of arms was adopted.

The town Coat of Arms for the Municipality of Middelburg, Transvaal, was approved and adopted by the first City Council on March 31, 1904, as the official heraldic symbol of Middelburg.

The Design

The coat of

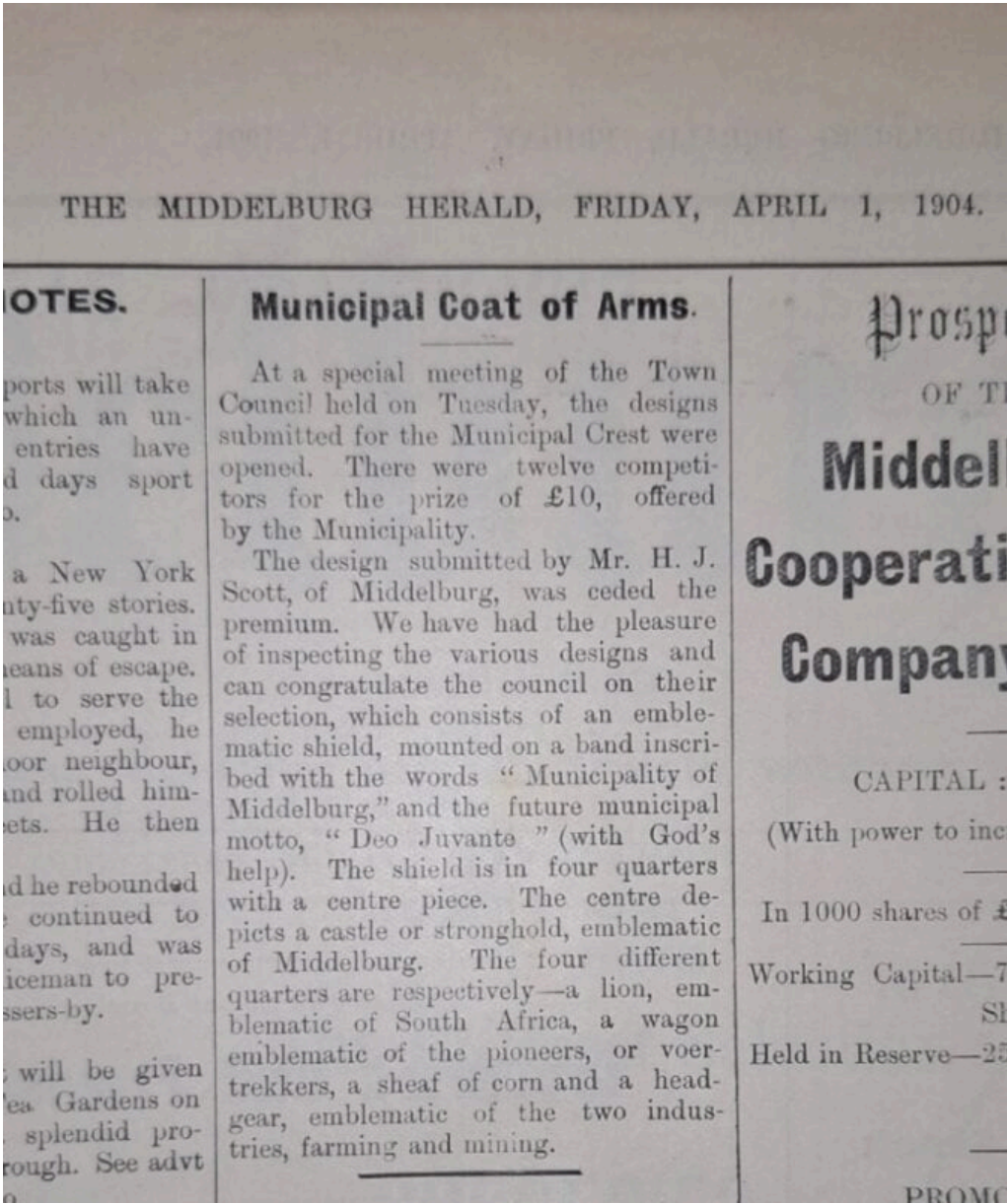


- The details appear on a green field.
- In the top left corner is a lion in an open field. This represents South Africa in its uninhabited or natural state.
- Top right corner, an old Voortrekker ox wagon. This represents the occupation of the land by the Voortrekkers.
- In the bottom left corner, a sheaf of wheat and a sickle. This represents the development in the agricultural field.
- Bottom right corner, a mine in operation. This explains that the mines followed agriculture.

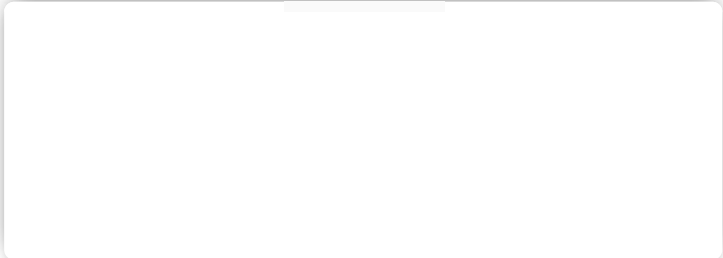
In the middle of the shield is a castle. The term 'Burg' refers to a town or city, since ancient towns were typically surrounded by fortifications. Its central position relates to the Dutch word '*middel*', meaning centre, which explains the name Middelburg.

The shield is encircled by the words, 'Municipality of Middelburg, Transvaal', with the motto *Deo Juvante* – meaning 'With God's help'– displayed at the bottom.





Report in the Middelburg Herald – predecessor of the Middelburg Observer – of 1 April 1904 reporting that the Town Coat of Arms had been approved (Photo: Rudi van Wyk)



In 1941 the new Municipal Offices building in Eksteen Street was opened. The Council Chamber was the main entrance. The Council Chamber was in the

In 1941, the new municipal offices building in Eksteen Street was opened. The Council Chamber of the City Council was on the top floor, directly above the main entrance. A stained-glass rendering of the town's coat of arms was placed above the door to the Council Chamber.

Middelburg Heritage is campaigning for this unique stained-glass coat of arms to be declared a local heritage conservation point.

Interestingly, the design reproduced in the stained-glass coat of arms contains the original design of a sickle at the sheaf of wheat and mining buildings with headgear towers. The 1903 description also refers to a working shaft tower. The coat of arms was subsequently given a heraldic touch with various symbols; the sickle was eliminated, and instead of a working mine, two crossed mining picks were added as mining symbols. By 1964, when Middelburg celebrated its centenary, the design featured two crossed mining picks and a simplified colour scheme.

Simplified coat of arms that was in use in 1964 with only two main background colours.



Municipal Offices in Eksteen Street, opened in 1941, with the balcony of the Council Chamber above the main entrance. The unique stained glass town Coat of Arms is above the inner entrance to the Council Chamber.



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coat of arm
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Allaart*; Cr.
HO Eksteen

(Mayor); Cr. EM Ellenberger; and Cr. PG Burger. Other members not in photo: Cr. JJ Trichardt* and Cr. JP Vercueil. *: Members of the committee that evaluated the town Coat of Arms design.

The Coat of Arms of the Municipality of Middelburg, Transvaal, after 1994

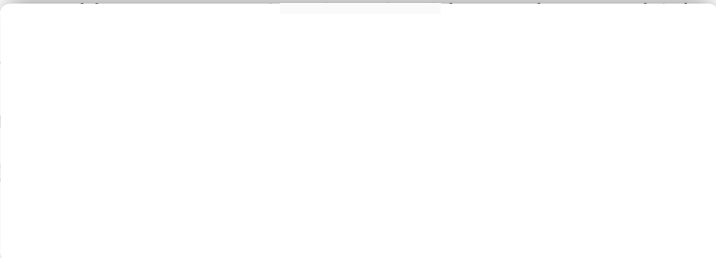
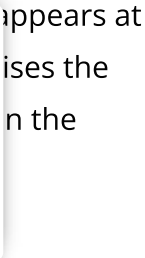
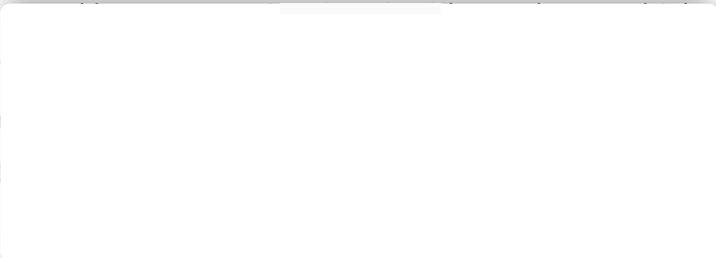
Following 1994, symbols at the national, provincial, and local levels were updated, and a new town coat of arms received approval. The Steve Tshwete Local Municipality was established.

Coat of arms of the Steve Tshwete Local Municipality

This coat of arms was adopted by the **Steve Tshwete Local Municipality** in April 2001.

It depicts an African shield, with the castle at the top, indicating that Middelburg is a municipality.

- The rising sun refers to Mpumalanga.
- The blue depicts water resources while the green, black diamonds and the wheel at the top refer to the main economic activities, namely agriculture, coal mining and industry, respectively.
- The leaves on the sides are from a Cycad species, found only in the Middelburg area.

The motto  appears at the bottom . It describes the way in which  in the municipality.

The coat of arms illustrates the key features and activities of the town, from the design created in 1904 to the present-day version.



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