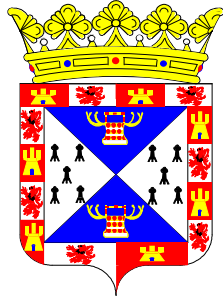


Medina-Sidonia



Description of Arms :

Escudo cuartelado en aspa : 1° y 4°, en campo de azur, una caldera, jaquelada de oro y gules, con siete cabezas de sierpe en cada asa, y 2° y 3°, en campo de plata, cinco arminos, de sable, puestos en aspa. Bordura ajedrezada de plata, con un leon de gules, y de gules, con una torre de oro, aclarada de azur.

Principal Title : Duchess of Medina-Sidonia.

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Creation : Spain, 1445.

Subsidiary Titles : Marquise of Vélez (1507) and of Villafranca del Bierzo (1486), three times Grandee of Spain.

Family Name : Alvarez de Toledo y Maura.

Family History : This is usually reckoned as one of the three most important Spanish titles. It was originally created in favour of don Juan Alonso Pérez de Guzmán el Bueno, who was theretofore Seignuer of Sanlúcar de Barremeda, Count de Niebla.

The title was created in 1445 and the Duke of Medina-Sidonia featured amongst the first twenty-five Grantees, elevated in 1520 by Charles Quint.

However, the main reason why this family figures in the history books is due to the fact that the then duke was admiral of the ill-fated Armada, sent by Philip II against England. This was in 1588 and it was there that Drake, Frobisher and Hawkins, together with Lord Howard of Effingham and the weather, inflicted such a stinging defeat on the Spanish that it took years for them to recover. It was there, also, that the English achieved mastery of the sea, which changed the history of the times and endured for several centuries.

Doña Luisa Isabel was known, for many years, as the Red Duchess on account of her political views and informal approach to the conventions usually so dear to the Spanish aristocracy.

Medina-Sidonia

Juan-Alonso Perez de Guzman el Bueno, Count of Niebla, Sire of Sancular de Barrameda,
1st Duke of Medina-Sidonia (1445)

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LUISA ISABEL ALVAREZ DE TOLEDO Y MAURA (1936-), D. of Medina-Sidonia (1957), M. of Velez (1951) and of Villafranca of Brezio
(1957)