



TUTR NOVUS II

Introduction to Heraldry and Heraldic Display
Vémundr Syvursson – July AS 58/2023

Introduction

In the SCA we put a number of different things under the banner of heraldry.

Voice Heraldry

- court heralds as the voice of the Crown or Coronet during courts
- field heralds announcing combatants and results during tournaments
- town cry heralds as ‘public address systems’ during events
- silent or sign heralds adding sign language interpretation to any of the above, especially during courts

Book Heraldry

- name heralds (onomastics, to be fancy) research names and help people choose and document their period SCA names
- armorial heralds help design and conflict check devices and badges, and research historical heraldic practice

Protocol Heraldry

- background/admin heralds who organize courts, maintain our lists of who has received awards, design ceremonies, advise on precedent, and similar

Some heralds only do one of the above, many of us do a bit of several but have a primary focus.

Levels of Heraldic Offices

- Society – Laurel Sovereign of Arms, their deputies, and staff
- Kingdom – Black Lion Principal Herald of An Tir, deputies & staff
- Principality – Silver Yale Principal Herald of Tir Righ, deputies & staff
- Branch – each Barony and Shire has a branch herald, who may have deputies
- At-Large – anyone interested in heraldry may, in An Tir, consider themselves a herald-at-large if they do not hold a formal office

Book Heraldry

Book heraldry is all about names and armoury. Book heralds can assist you in choosing a name, a device and badges that are unique to you and fit the medieval aesthetics.

Names

One of the things that adds to the ambiance of the SCA is taking on a ‘persona’ and becoming a medieval person. To separate our medieval persona from our modern persona, we choose an SCA name. This is the name you will be called by and you will receive awards under this name. Your name should be unique to you so you aren’t confused with someone else. Some people have multiple personas within the SCA, and therefore may have multiple names (you can register up to 10 different names).

Although you don’t have to register your name, it is strongly recommended you do so. You cannot register a device or badge if you don’t have a registered name (they can be done at the same time). Note: providing a name when you buy an SCA membership is not the same as registering your name. The two are not connected.

To register a name, you need to provide some documentation to show that it is a feasible name for a medieval person. It does not have to match the language/culture of your persona, although most people prefer to do so. Your name needs at least two parts – a given name and a byname. The byname can be one of several types and what is most appropriate will change depending on the culture. Some examples of bynames are:

- From the name of your parent (ie Johnson, Karlsdottir, ap Owen, etc.)
- From your occupation (le Bakere, Smith, la Broderesse [embroiderer], etc.)
- From where you live or came from (de York, London, von Berlin, Attewode, Bythesea, etc.) You can use your branch name as a byname (Alicia of Hartwood).
- Nicknames based on physical or personality traits (le Long, der Junger [the younger], le Wilfulle, etc.)

There are many websites which can be used to find and document your name. Two good places to start are the Medieval Names Archive and the SCA College of Arms Name Articles (these are listed under Resources). Avoid baby name and similar websites as these don’t differentiate names people have made up or are modern. Heralds can assist you in locating other good name sources.

There are rules which as to what time periods/cultures can be combined. It is easiest if your given name and byname is from the same source, however a herald can help you verify that your name ‘works’.

Armoury

Armoury is the term used to refer to devices and badges. The purpose of armoury is for identification. Good medieval style has only a few charges. It should not be a “resume” showing all your interests.

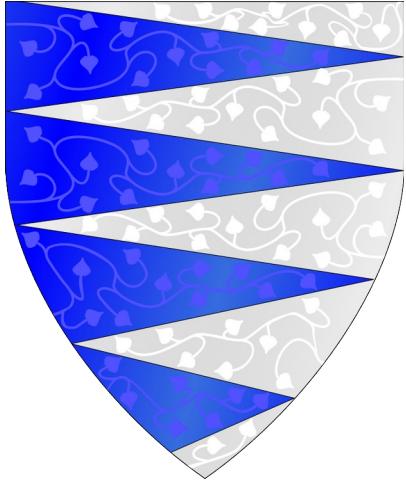
A device is what you may think of as a coat of arms. In the SCA it is called your device until you have received an Award of Arms, after which it can be called your device or your arms.

A badge is essentially an identifying label or logo. It can be owned by an individual, a group or an order. It is used to identify possessions or things/people associated with you.

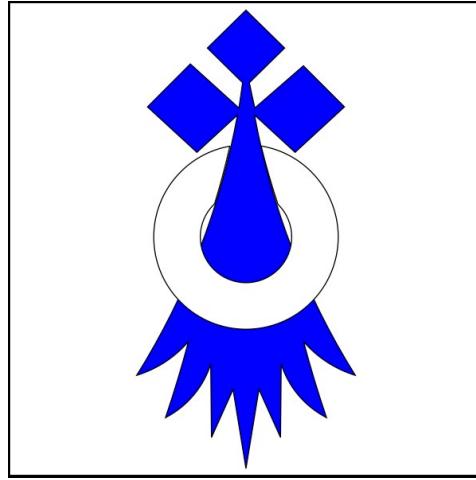
In simple terms, a device says “This is ME” and a badge says “This is MINE”. A device must always have a “field” (background), whereas a badge can be “fieldless” (have no background) if all its parts are joined.

You can currently register up to ten pieces of armoury (one device and nine badges, although you can display a badge as if it were a device).

My arms,
Pily barry
argent and
azure, in a
fairly fancy
emblazon.



One of
my
badges,



(Fieldless) An ermine tail azure enfiled of an annulet argent.

Here are some basic terms to assist you in understanding armoury. This is far from a complete list.

Blazon – The heraldic description of a piece of armoury. There are many specialized terms used in heraldry.

Emblazon – The picture of the armoury.

Tincture – What we normally think of as “colours”, however “colour” has a different meaning in heraldry. Tinctures are divided into “colours”, “metals” and “furs” and each has its own heraldic name.

The colours are azure (blue), gules (red), purpure (purple), sable (black), and vert (green).

The metals are argent (white/silver) and Or (yellow/gold). Or is the only tincture that is capitalized.

There are several forms of furs, each with several tincture variations. Ermine and vair are the two most common.

There is a general rule that metal should not appear directly on top of metal, nor colour on colour. “Overall” charges are compared to the field. Ermine is considered a colour or metal depending on the background tincture. Vair, which is equally a colour and a metal is considered neutral and can be layered with any tincture as long as it is not one of the vair tinctures.

Dexter – Right side as viewed by person holding the shield.

Sinister – Left side as viewed by the person holding the shield.

As dexter and sinister are based on the person standing behind the shield, it is the reverse to the person looking at the shield from the front. Similar to stage right/stage left in a theatre.

Field – This is the background of the armoury. All devices must have a field but badges can be “fieldless” (no background). Fields can be of one “tincture” or divided into multiple “tinctures”.

Charge – These are the objects or shapes included on the armoury which include such items as a lion, a wheel, a mermaid, a tree, a circle, etc. Charges used in SCA armoury need to be historically based (either used in medieval armoury or an object known in medieval times). Charges can be directly on the field, on another charge, or “overall” (partly on the field and partly on another charge). Charges should fill be “big, bold and butch” – i.e. fill their space.

Ordinary – A special class of simple geometric charges (see examples).

Primary charge(s) – This is the main charge group. It will be directly on the field; usually in the center.

Secondary charge(s) – These usually surround the primary charge and should be smaller.

Tertiary charge(s) – These are charges completely on top of another charge.

Overall charge – An overall charge lies partly on the field and partly on another charge. Both charges must be identifiable.

For a more complete introduction to armoury that includes some great graphics and is still only nine pages long, I highly recommend reading Heraldry for Non-Heralds, often referred to as the New Primer. <https://heraldry.sca.org/armory/newprimer/>

Submitting Your Name & Armoury

The standard forms for sending in your name, device, and badge are available on the Tir Righ College of Heralds website. Each item costs \$10 Canadian, payable by cheque or money order.

After you submit your items they go through a process of conflict checking, decision making, and proofreading to make sure they aren't too close to something that's already registered in the SCA and that they conform to our current rules for names or armoury.

We protect important real-world names and armoury, so you can't register *Henry Tudor*, or use the arms of Berlin (*Argent, a bear rampant sable*), for example. Our rules also restrict use of some charges (crowns, for example) and outright forbid others, usually due to real-world offensiveness.

The whole registration process takes 7-9 months and usually results in registration of your items. If there are issues, one or more of your items might be returned for further work; if this happens re-submission does not cost extra. Tir Righ's notification heralds will keep you updated by email as your submissions move through the process.

What To Do With Your Armoury!

There are many ways to use your device and/or badge once you've registered it.
Here are just a few examples:



Make a banner



Decorate your shield



Make a heraldic tabard or other clothing with your device, or just in your colours.



Decorate your tent and its furnishings.



Put your badge on your possessions.



Identify your children, pets, or minions.

Resources

If you would like to learn more about heraldry, here are just a few places to start (there are many more).

Facebook

SCA (Unofficial) Heraldic Consultation – open to anyone; good place to get assistance on names and armoury from experienced heralds
Baby Heralds of the SCA (Unofficial) – geared towards teaching new heralds
Ask the Tir Righ Heralds – a smaller, quieter Tir Righ-specific group for heraldic questions
SCA Court Heralds Chat – for those interested in being a court herald
Tir Righ Silent Heralds – for those interested in sign language heraldry

Discord

Known World Heralds server – aimed at new and experienced heralds looking to chat with other heralds

Websites

- Tir Righ College of Heralds <http://tirrigh.org/heralds/index.php>
 - Includes information and forms for registering your heraldry if you live in Tir Righ.
- An Tir College of Heralds <https://antirheralds.org/>
 - Includes a number of useful articles on various aspects of heraldry.
- SCA College of Arms Articles <https://heraldry.sca.org/articles.html>
 - Articles on Names, Armoury, Voice and Sign Heraldry
- SCA College of Arms - Frequently Asked Questions <https://heraldry.sca.org/FAQs.html>
 - Answers many of the questions people have about the submission process.
- SCA College of Arms Rules and Regulations <https://heraldry.sca.org/regs.html>
 - The official rules - but consult a herald if you find them too technical
- Sign Herald's Handbook <https://heraldry.sca.org/sign/SignHeraldsHandbook.html>
 - Reference manual for Silent/Sign Heralds.
- Medieval Names Archive <https://www.s-gabriel.org/names/index.shtml>
 - A good starting point for finding and documenting names.
- Pictorial Dictionary of Heraldry (PicDic) <https://mistholme.com/>
 - A good source for different charges with images and information about use in the SCA.
- The Book of Traceable Heraldic Art <http://heraldicart.org/>
 - A huge and growing collection of SCA-focussed heraldic art

Acknowledgements

Thanks to Alicia le Willful for the original handout that formed the basis of this one.

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As of July 2023, Barony of Seagirt Baronial Herald, and Tir Righ Submissions Herald