

Heraldic Myths ***(Clearing Up Misconceptions Involving SCA Heraldry)*** ***compiled by Modar Neznanich***

There are many misconceptions involving SCA heraldry that have developed over the years. This article attempts to address some of the most common concerns and provide current and correct information about them.

Armory (Device/Badge) Related Myths

1. I can register my family's coat-of-arms because it already belongs to me.

This is false. If you are in fact entitled to arms in the real world, you can't register those exact arms. This is per the Administrative Handbook of the College of Arms (III.B.6.). However, any blazonable difference, even if it isn't worth a DC, clears it of this problem. (As per the 8/97 LoAR concerning the device of David of Moffat, from An Tir.)

A side note concerning family coat-of-arms:

Arms are property. The first person to carry a coat of arms passes that coat to his descendants, who pass it on to theirs, and so on. Different countries have used different rules for the transmission of heraldry. Traditionally the right to bear arms has been transmitted through the male line only. In some places, all sons of an armiger (someone who bears arms) inherit the arms; in others only the oldest male inherits the arms and all other sons must change the arms in some way to show that they are a junior member of the family. (British law was recently changed to allow women to inherit arms, but this is such a recent change that it will not affect genealogical research for several years).

Thus, finding arms attributed to your surname does not mean that you have the right to carry those arms; it means that someone with your last name once had the right to carry them. The same surname is often borne by unrelated people, and you have to show a direct male line of descent to a person who is known to have arms. Demonstrating this relationship can be a major task.

[Quoted from the article, "[Genealogical and Heraldic Research Sources](#)" produced by the Academy of St. Gabriel and webpage maintained by Jim Trigg (Blaise de Cormeilles).]

2. Sable is considered a fur in SCA heraldry.

This is false. Sable means black, which is classified as a color, not a fur in SCA heraldry. (Confusion arises because there is an actual animal fur known as sable.)

3. Furs are considered neutral with respect to the Rule of Tincture. Hence they may be placed upon either metals or colors, or be charged with either metals or colors.

This is mostly true in heraldry outside the SCA, but the SCA considers each fur individually. In the case of the ermine style furs, their background tincture categorizes them since that has the greater area. Therefore ermine, being mostly comprised of argent, is treated like a metal. Counter-ermine, being mostly comprised of sable, is treated like a color. In the case of vair style furs and potent style furs which have more or less equal areas of both tinctures, they are indeed considered neutral. However, a charge of either of the constituent tinctures is not allowed go over or under a vair fur.

(i.e. If using the standard blue and white vair, neither an azure or argent may be placed on the vair sections, nor the vair placed on blue or white sections.)

4. The Heralds have stopped checking against mundane armory, so now you can use any device you want, even if it existed in period.

Perhaps it was best stated by the former SCA Laurel King of Arms Da'ud ibn Auda, "It is true that the SCA College of Arms no longer checks for conflict against any but famous non-SCA arms. But to deliberately search out a real coat of arms and to adopt it is, in short, theft. Your arms should represent you, not someone else. Independent invention or creation of a coat of arms which may be similar to non-SCA arms, however, is permissible."

5. My spouse and I must use identical colors and/or charges to show that we are married.

In period practice, the use of identical colors and/or charges by a man and a woman identified them as brother and sister, not husband and wife.

6. All the "simple" devices are taken, so you will need to have a bordure or chief or some such thing on your device.

While many "simple" devices have already been registered, thanks to the implementation of the Modest Proposal several years ago, a large amount of heraldic space has been made available, allowing greater ease in registering simple devices.

7. The more complex a device is the more likely it is to pass.

This is not necessarily true. The more complex a device is, the more armory it could potentially conflict with. In addition, the SCA Heraldry Standards for Evaluation of Names and Armory (SENA) states, "Armory must use a limited number of tinctures and types of charges." It clarifies, "As a rule of thumb, the total of the number of tinctures plus the number of types of charges in a design should not exceed eight."

8. You can't use the quartered field division because that means marshalling which isn't allowed.

This is false. You can use a quartered field, just not in a manner that implies marshalling. The SCA Heraldry Standards for Evaluation of Names and Armory, SENA Armory 6.F states, "quarterly and per pale divisions of the field may be registered only when there is no unmistakable appearance of marshalling." This section of SENA gives detailed information about what does and doesn't appear to be marshalling.

<http://heraldry.sca.org/sena.html#A6>

9. If the blazon (word description) of the device is too long, they won't register it.

This is false. As long as a device meets the SCA heraldry rules and does not conflict, it can be registered, no matter how long the word description is.

10. The shape of the form you submit your device on is the shape you must display it on (always).

This is false. In period, coats-of-arms were displayed in various shapes including lozenges, heart-shapes, roundels, heater-shield, square, rectangle, etc. The escutcheon (shield) shape is a convenient armorial shape for most designs and perhaps the most commonly recognized. Hence that is the standard shape placed on forms. The square (formerly roundel) shape is also common and used to quickly identify badge forms from

device forms. However, the shape on the form of your submission does not limit you on what shape you display your device on. If you wish to designate a piece of armory as your device, submit it on an escutcheon (shield) shape form. If you wish to designate a piece of armory as a badge, submit it on a square badge form. But then you may display either device or badge on any of the shapes previously noted.

11. The *exact* shade of color/metal used on the submission sheet is the *exact* shade you must always display your device in (always).

This is false. You are not required to display your device in the same shade of tincture that was used on your submission forms. Period practice shows us that various shades were used for the same tincture. This was sometimes a result of local dyes, sometimes a matter of taste. And the metals can be displayed in a metallic or non-metallic tincture (Or as gold or yellow, Argent as silver or white).

12. Badges have to be fieldless.

This is false. Badges may have fields.

13. Heraldry consider the cutoff for period as 1485.

This is currently false. The current cutoff is 1600, although there is a "gray area" for documentation: if it's documented up thru 1650, it's allowed, on the premise that there is a very good chance that item was in use before 1600.

The origins of the 1485 cutoff belief for most people derives from a 1992 TI article "Heraldry in the SCA" by Mistress Elis O'Boirne and Duke Frederick of Holland. On the second page of the article is a glossary where some terms and concepts are defined, among them is the following: "Period: For heraldic purposes, charges must have been knowable before 1600 or invented within the SCA since AS I, and style should be taken from pre-1485 heraldic usages." (Lee Forgue, 1992)

14. I can't have a cloak (or banner) with my device on it unless I'm a Peer.

This is false. You may display your device on a cloak, tunic or other garb. You merely may not use a symbol on your cloak display that is reserved for peers unless you are a peer. (By law or custom, this may vary from Kingdom to Kingdom, but could include displayed around the device: a chain, a laurel wreath, a pelican in its piety <or vulning itself>, a chapeau, a white belt or an orle of blood-drops around the outside of the device.)

15. Charges that have been previously registered in the Society are always okay to use.

This is false. The College of Arms' level of understanding of period heraldic practices has increased greatly over the years. A number of charges that have been registered in the past are now seen to be at odds with the heraldry of our period of study and are no longer accepted for registration.

16. You can't have people/body parts (particularly a hand) as a charge.

This is false. Such charges are allowed. However, a gules hand on argent in something that could appear as an augmentation is deemed the Red Hand of Ulster and is prohibited in the SCA. Additionally, a "Hand of Glory" (hands flaming, enflamed or on flames) is a prohibited charge. Any other hands, even red hands on white, are OK barring conflict.

17. Unicorns can't be registered because they're mythical beasts (or because they've all been used up).

This is false. There are many creatures/monsters used in period heraldry that are mythical. And while there have been a large number of unicorns registered in SCA heraldry, it is still possible to register a device with a unicorn on it or other common charge.

18. I can't use an annulet unless I'm a knight, because an annulet is a link of chain, and chains are reserved for knights.

This is false. While unadorned chains have been reserved for knights in the SCA, an annulet is considered to be a ring, not a chain link and may be used by non-knights.

19. I can't use a lion on my device unless my persona is English, because lions are on the arms of England.

This is false. Lions are not restricted to English coats-of-arms or those with English personae.

20. Only queens can use roses on their arms.

This is false. What is reserved to queens (and Companions of the Rose) are rose wreaths. Chaplets of roses are reserved to princesses. Single and multiple roses may be registered as long as they don't look like a wreath.

Note however that a rose tinctured both gules and argent is an English royal badge, called the "Tudor rose", and is not registerable in the Society.

21. I can't use black roses because that is considered a symbol of evil.

This is false. As stated in the previous answer, single and multiple roses may be registered as long as they don't look like a wreath.

22. I can only use a sword on my device if I'm a fighter.

This is false. Anyone, fighter or non-fighter, may use a sword as a heraldic charge.

23. You can't register pawprints.

This is false. Anyone may use a pawprint as a heraldic charge. The only concern about pawprints is that a pawprint is a pawprint is a pawprint. No difference is given between the pawprints of different animals.
NOTE: Pawprints are deemed to be a step from period practice (registerable but a "weirdness").

24. You can't register knots.

This is false. Some knots are allowed, but certain knots, particularly SCA-invented knots, are disallowed. (For example, the LoAR dated 9/96 states that the Donnelly knot was disallowed after 2/97.)

25. You can't register knotted serpents.

This is false. Serpents, even nowed ones, are registerable. They simply must be in the form of one of the allowed type of knots.

26. You can't register compass roses.

This is false. While unattested in period armory, they are registerable.

27. You can't use red gouttes (drops) on your device unless you're a Pelican.

This is false. The use of red drops on a device is allowed for anyone.

28. The use of dragons is restricted. (A – You can't use a dragon unless you're from the Middle Kingdom because that's their symbol. B – You can't use a dragon if you're from the Middle Kingdom. C – You can't register a dragon because they've all been used up.)

All of these are false. Neither the Middle Kingdom nor anywhere else restricts the use of dragons as a heraldic charge. And while a large number of devices have been registered that have dragons on them, it is still possible to register a device that has a dragon. **There are only two restrictions on dragons. 1) You may not use an Imperial Dragon (five-toed Chinese Dragon) as that is the symbol of the Emperor of China. 2) You may not use a Royal Dragon (four-toed Chinese Dragon) as that is the symbol of the Ruler of Korea.**

29. The use of tigers is restricted. (A – You can't use a tiger unless you're from the East Kingdom because that's their symbol. B – You can't use a tiger if you're from the East Kingdom.)

Both of these are false. Neither the East Kingdom nor anywhere else restricts the use of tigers as a heraldic charge.

30. You can't register mullets of five greater and five lesser points sable via Ansteorra.

This is false. At one time Ansteorra considered a policy, backed by the Crown, that nobody in Ansteorra would be allowed to register such a charge unless it was for an augmentation granted by the Crown. However, as anyone can appeal a kingdom heraldic decision, and the College of Arms would register such, because there is no general restriction on such a charge, this policy would be ineffective. Thus, they do not have such a policy.

31. Apes and monkeys can't be used on devices because they were once used to represent slavery (several pro-slavery handbills during the Civil War represented slaves as primates in chains).

This is false. There is no restriction on the use of primates as heraldic charges.

32. You have to have an Award of Arms before you can register your heraldry.

This is false. Anyone may register heraldry. Until they receive an Award of Arms (or higher award), it is called a "heraldic device" instead of a "coat of arms". Only the terminology changes when you become armigerous.

33. You have to have an Award of Arms before you can display your heraldry.

This is false. Anyone is permitted by law and custom to display their registered armory whether they have awards or not. There is occasional controversy about the theory regarding UNregistered armory, but in practice you can display just about any armory you like, even if it's not period style.

34. A Grant of Arms gives the person the right to bear the Kingdom arms as a part of their device.

This is false. Nobody can bear, as part of their personal arms, the complete arms of an SCA branch. (Although some kingdoms give augmentations of arms and the Crown may ask that it include something very close to the kingdom arms.)

35. Only the Seneschal can display the Shire's arms.

Noted in the July 1980 LoAR cover letter from SCA Laurel Sovereign-of-Arms Office is this information:

"The arms of a branch are reserved to the head of the branch. In the case of a kingdom, principality or barony this is the King, Prince or Baron. In all other cases it is the seneschal. Kings, Princes and Barons may bear the arms of their branch upon a shield in battle as if they were their own personal arms, so long as they hold their office and no longer. Seneschals may not do so. All heads of branches may display the banner of the branch to indicate their presence. At any event held in a branch the arms of the branch may be displayed whether or not the head of the branch is present, to indicate that the branch is hosting the event. In grand marches the arms of branches may be carried by groups marching as those branches. Otherwise nobody can display the arms of a branch as if they were personal arms."

This translates to a hosting group of an event may display the group arms, even if the head of the branch is not present. All other times, the display of branch arms is reserved for when the head of the branch is participating at the event. (Please note that this does not require the head of a branch to be sitting in their camp at all times for the group arms to be flown there...merely that the head of the branch must be attending the event.)

It is suggested that a group register a badge that may be displayed by any shire member to denote affiliation.

36. The jessant-de-lys charge is either symbolic of the English 'leopard' devouring the French 'lily' or it is a representation of a panther's face issuing that sweet breath that can spellbind even a dragon.

Like many stories of heraldic symbology, there seems to be no real support for these claims. Several of these sort of "pat explanations" evolved during the revival of romance of the Victorian era, with no basis in medieval history.

37. There is a set manner in which ermine spots/semy charges have to be drawn. (A - can't be chopped by the edge of the shield. B - must be chopped by the edge of the shield. C - can't lie under a charge. D - must lie under a charge.)

This is false. There is no single set manner. Such charges may be complete or chopped, as the bearer wishes. They may lie under a charge or not, as the bearer wishes. They may be drawn in a regular patten or placed in where they fit. The only recommendation is not to place such under charges of the same tinctures as it can blur the identifiability of the charge.

38. You can fimbriate anything. (Conversely, you cannot fimbriate anything.)

Both are false. The SCA Heraldry Rules for Submission (VIII. 3) states, "Voiding and fimbriation may only be used with simple geometric charges placed in the center of the design." [Editor's Note: The Rules for Submission have been replaced by the Standards for Evaluation of Names and Armory, SENA, but the rules on voiding and fimbriation are the same].

39. Semys are field treatments, not charges. In terms of layering, semys count as a treatment; in terms of difference, they count as a charge group.

This is false. They are CHARGES for all purposes of the rules, for layering, for contrast, for difference, for style, whatever. **Exception:** semy of ermine spots are part of an ermined tincture, not charges. Quasi-exception to the exception: one or a few ermine spots are not semy and so they count as separate charges, not as part of a tincture.

40. You can't get more than one DC for a group of secondaries.

This is false. Different changes to the same group of secondaries gets one DC per change.

41. You cannot get more than one DC for a group of tertiaries.

This is false. Under the new rules (SENA) you can get more than one DC for the changes to a single group of *tertiaries*.

42. There are restrictions against using letters. (A - You can't register anything with letters. B – You can register words but not letters. C – You can register letters but only on a badge not a device.)

Letters (and words) may be registered on either badges or devices. The only current restriction is that armory with just letters or words, and nothing else on it, will not be registered.

As per the 8/94 LoAR under the Laurel King of Arms, Da'ud ibn Auda, "Precedent still disallows armory consisting of a single letter or abstract symbol which, as the astrological symbol for Earth, this is. Otherwise, letters, words, and abstract symbols are fair game. And as of the March 2006 LoAR, there was an extension on the restriction. In the return of the armory of Yamahara Yorimasa (via AEthelmeare), it states: "We therefore extend the ban on single abstract charges to cover any armory consisting solely of abstract charges, in any language (e.g., Japanese kanji, Norse runes, Arabic script, etc.). This applies whether the armory consists of a single word or a phrase." The LoAR also states, "The use of kanji is one step from period practice. By which, yes, we mean period European heraldic practice."

43. You must have registered armory in the SCA, even if your persona wouldn't have.

The only requirements some Kingdoms have is, to receive the scroll for an Award of Arms, you must have a registered device. (This is to get the scroll, not the award.) Also some Kingdoms require you to have a device (or one in process) if you want to fight in their Crown Tourney.

44. A badge only needs one DC from other armory.

Badges are subject to the same rules of conflict as devices: two DCs or one SC. The confusion probably arises because fieldless badges automatically get one DC for the fieldlessness.

45. You can't have an argent bend, because that's reserved to Masters of Arms.

This is false. Argent bends are not reserved heraldic charges. This myth may have arisen from a misunderstanding of the entry in the College of Arms' Glossary of Terms which states that only a Master of Arms can have a white baldric on their arms. A bend is not considered a baldric. In fact, it is hard to see how a baldric could be put on arms in a recognizable manner except by vesting a human with one.

46. A bar sinister, a bend enarched, a bend sinister or a bendlet sinister on a coat of arms shows that the bearer is a bastard.

First, there is no such thing as a "bar sinister" in heraldry. A bar is a narrow horizontal stripe, so there is no way for it to be sinister. Second, there was no set general pattern in any armorial system to designate bastardry. Neither a bend enarched, a bend sinister nor a bendlet sinister denotes bastardry. Although some acknowledged bastards of the French crown, did use a "bendlet sinister couped overall" (also called a baton sinister) on their devices.

47. You can't have charges on flaunches.

This is false. There are examples of charged flaunches in period, although they were not very common. Such are perfectly registerable. **NOTE:** While flaunches can be charged, tierces, gores and gussets cannot be charged.

48. You can't have a metal charge on a fieldless badge.

This is false. Charges composing a fieldless badge may be either a metal or a color.

49. Laurel wreaths have one leaf for every kingdom in existence at the time of submission.

This is false. If this were true the laurel wreath on the device of the Middle Kingdom would have two leaves, the laurel wreath of the East would have one leaf, and the laurel wreath of the West would be a stick with no leaves.

50. A reasonable way to draw up a coat of arms is to put everything you do on it.

This is false. In period heraldry the only devices that had charges dealing with what activities you did was that of merchants' arms, and that was done in a limited way.

51. If you have "a charge and another charge tincture semy of charges", the semy applies to the first charge as well as the second.

For example, you have a device with a blue field, a white roundel and a bordure that is white with green drops. Is the correct blazon "Azure, a roundel and a bordure argent goutty vert." or "Azure, a roundel argent and a bordure argent goutty vert." ? While this one was debated at one time, it has been determined that "Azure, a roundel and a bordure argent goutty vert." puts gouttes on both the roundel and the bordure. "Azure, a roundel argent and a bordure argent goutty vert" gets the gouttes on the bordure only.

52. You can display armory that isn't registered, but you have to put a red bendlet on it.

This is false. At one time, there was a custom in the Kingdom of An Tir of putting a red duct-tape "bend" across unregistered armory, on the field of combat. This is no longer the case.

53. You only have to check badges for conflict versus other badges.

This is false. You have to check all armory against all other registered armory

54. All charges whose tinctures are "proper" are considered neutral with respect to the Rule of Tincture. Hence they may be placed upon either metals or colors, or be charged with either metals or colors.

This is false. Not ALL "proper" charges are considered neutral. Some "proper" charges are considered to have a metal tincture class and some are considered to have a color tincture class. This depends upon the charge. In the College of Arms [Glossary of Terms](#), there is a table entitled [Conventional "Proper" Colorings](#) that lists which tincture class various charges are.

55. You have to check your device against every known coat-of-arms for conflict.

In January 1995, the "Modest Proposal" took effect. As a result, the only heraldic devices that must be checked against are those listed in the SCA Ordinary and Armorial (O&A). All protected mundane heraldry that devices must be conflict checked against is listed in the O&A.

56. Changing a group's heraldry affects its status.

This is false. Once a group is established, changing its device does not affect its status. Note, however that a petition is needed to make a change in a group's heraldry. The Administrative Handbook of the College of Arms (IV.C.5.) does state, "Submissions involving the name or arms of an active branch must include evidence of support for the action on the part of a majority of the active members of the branch. In the case of branches with no ruling noble, this support may be demonstrated by a petition of a majority of the populace and officers or by a petition of the seneschal and at least three-quarters of the other local officers. In the case of branches with ruling nobles, such petitions must also include a statement of support from the ruling noble."

57. If your SCA group is a College, the group's heraldry has to have a book on it.

This is false. While many modern-world colleges utilize a book in their arms, there is no such requirement for SCA groups. HOWEVER, the [Administrative Handbook of the SCA College of Arms](#), in section II.D.2., does state: "By Society convention, all branch arms must include one or more laurel wreaths as an important element in the design."

58. You can't have charges on a tierce.

This is correct. From examples in period, tierces were not charged. However, the SCA has registered a few tierces where the line-edge of the tierce utilized a complex/fancy line of division, rather than a plain line.

59. You can't have charges on a gore or a gusset.

This is correct. From examples in period, these were not charged. At one time the SCA did allow them to be charged, but no longer.

Name and Title Related Myths

1. I don't need to register my name again with the College of Arms because I have it on my membership card so it's already registered with the office of the Registry.

This is false. The name on your membership card is whatever name you put on your membership application. It has nothing to do with registering your name with the SCA College of Arms.

2. Any name that sounds medieval can be registered.

This is false. According to SENA, "A registerable name phrase must follow the rules of grammar and structure for a single time and place. It may not mix languages unless that mixing of languages within a name phrase is attested as a period practice [period defined as pre-1600]."

3. You can make new names based on known patterns, so you can make any letter substitutions you want.

This is misleading. You *can* form names using documented elements or interpolating between existing names or using known patterns. Random substitutions of letters does not count as "following the language constructs".

4. Spelling was quite variable before the modern era, so you can spell a name any way you like.

Not exactly. In our period, the spoken version of a word was primary, while the written form was simply a way of recording it. Any spelling that would reproduce the sound was "correct", but the way sounds were represented varied widely from language to language and even from one period of time to another within the same language. It takes at least a little familiarity with a particular language to understand what the rules are for the language. What you can depend on is that the rules for languages in period are distinctly different from those for 20th C. American English.

5. If you find a masculine name that you like, you can make its feminine cognate by adding "-a" to the end.

This is false, even for modern English. In many of the Latin-derived languages, it is sometimes true, but in the Celtic languages such as Irish or Scots Gaelic or Welsh, it is almost never the case.

6. If a name has been registered before, it will be registered again (even if it's not documentable) because of the Grandfather Clause.

This can be false. The College of Arms' level of understanding of period naming practices has increased greatly over the years. A number of names (and charges) that have been registered in the past are now no longer accepted for registration. The Grandfather Clause only allows people and groups to register elements that they themselves have already registered, or for their real-world close relatives to petition to register them, if they are otherwise no longer acceptable for registration.

7. No household names are being registered anymore, as they are "Out of Period".

This is false. Household names may be registered, however they must follow period naming practices. The SCA Heraldry [Standards for Evaluation of Names and Armory](#) states, "The designators for household names must be documented as a form describing a group of people in a particular culture. It must be compatible with the substantive element in terms of content and style... Several kinds of groups of people have served as models for household names. They include a noble household, a military unit, a guild, a group of people associated with an inn or tenement house, a university or school (noting that the word college is reserved for branches), clans, and an organized group of musicians or actors."

8. Names need only one or two citations.

There is no fixed limit, just whatever makes a plausible argument. In practice, usually one example suffices if it's clearly of the same culture and general time period, in the spelling and usage desired, used by a human, and if there's no reason to believe it was unique (as for a legendary hero/ine). Otherwise, you may need more to demonstrate plausibility.

9. Citing the use of a name in a book about the Middle Ages or Renaissance is sufficient documentation.

Unfortunately, many writers of non-fiction about our period translate or modernize name spellings, so you can't even rely on a history text for the correct spelling of a name. And in the case of fiction, many authors either make names up or use name out of context for the period they are writing about.

10. If you can find a name in a "what to name the baby" book, you have documented it sufficiently.

This is false. While such books are fine for choosing a name for your baby, they almost never give information needed to make them a good resource. (When a particular name was used historically.) Nor do they normally give you anything but the modern form. Frequently the "meaning" listed is also inaccurate.

11. You always address someone using their highest title.

Custom varies as to which title to use when a person has multiple titles. In some places, when a person is in the course of performing duties for an office, the use of their office title takes precedence over their award titles. The best policy is to ask. (In some Kingdoms, fighters are announced on the fighting field by their highest **fighting** title, not using titles earned from non-fighting awards.)

12. "Title stacking", like "Duke Sir Master Baron", is fine.

Title-stacking is a far from period practice and most SCA authorities recommend not doing it. Although this could vary with local custom.

13. "Alphabet soup", like "John of York, OP, OSM, ASC", is period and fine.

Initialisms are post-period and are generally discouraged, although this does vary with local custom.

14. All the elements of a name have to date to within 300 years of each other.

This is false. The 6/95 Laurel of Arms Cover Letter states: "There have been some commenters of late who have been calling for the return of name submissions where the various elements of the name are not dated to within 300 years of each other. Other commenters are apparently under the impression that some names have already been returned because their various elements are not dated to within 300 years of each other. Laurel is at a loss to understand how a precedent set by Baron Bruce which said specifically that a temporal discontinuity of 300 years or more was not, in and of itself, sufficient reason to return a name, has become in recent times the "300 year rule" requiring the return of a submission." Under SENA, names in the same regional naming group merely need to be within 500 years of each other. Names in separate, but compatible regional naming groups need to be within 300 years of each other.

15. "Fitz" denoted bastardry.

This is false. Fitz is simply the Anglo-Norman word for "son", derived ultimately from the Latin <filius>.

Personnel Related Myths

1. If you don't have a loud booming voice, you can't be a herald.

There are many aspects to heraldry and not all of them require a loud voice. Book heraldry does not require such and for vocal work, almost anyone can be taught projection that can make them heard in court. If you have an interest, don't hesitate to get involved in heraldry.

2. All Heralds know all about Heraldry.

This is not true. Some heralds have specialties (book heraldry, field heraldry, court heraldry or a mixture). And like anything else, there is a learning curve. Some heralds pick up in one area faster than in others. If what someone tells you doesn't make sense, ask someone else. If you can document it, you stand a chance, even if everyone says "No Way, we don't do that" ...precedents have been overturned before.

3. Shires have pursuivants, Baronies and Kingdoms have heralds.

This is a matter of local custom and will vary widely from Kingdom to Kingdom. In some Kingdoms the title depends on the office, in other Kingdoms the title depends on the rank of the individual. In Calontir, custom has been for Baronies to register a title for their herald and use the designator Pursuivant with it (i.e. Fountain Pursuivant for the Forgotten Sea herald; Hippogriff Pursuivant for the Three Rivers herald, etc.). Shires in Calontir are allowed to register a titled name for their group herald if they so desire (i.e. Talon Herald for the Cum an Iolair herald, Sea-Sheep Herald for the Aston Tor herald, etc.) or they may simply use their group's name with the Herald designator (i.e. Houndsford Herald, Crescent Moon Herald, etc.) without registering a title.

Procedure Related Myths

1. Heraldic customs and sumptuary laws are universal throughout all SCA Kingdoms.

This is false. While some Kingdoms have similar customs and laws, many are greatly different from each other.

2. The heralds only look for ways and reasons to return a submission, they don't try to help it pass.

Nothing could be further from the truth. A large part of the work done by heralds (at every level) is to work toward determining how to help someone with their submission.

3. You have to be a paid/registered SCA member to register a name/device.

This is false. Anyone may register a name/device. The only heraldic benefit a paid SCA, Inc. membership gets you is, if you have an item in conflict with another item in the same months' Laurel meeting, and you're a member and they're not, you win.

4. You can send a name and device registration through any group in any kingdom.

This is false. Administrative Handbook (IV.b): "Kingdom of Residence – Submissions normally must be made through the appropriate heraldic officers as defined by the kingdom of which the submitter is a subject according to Corpora and Board policy." Each kingdom has its own rules about whether you even submit through groups versus sending it direct to kingdom.

5. If you register arms, you cannot change them _ever_.

This is false. You have to pay the submission fee again, but you may change arms as often as you want.

6. War (Pennsic, Estrella, Lilies, etc) submissions are different because:

- a. They stand a better chance of passing and will be processed sooner.**
- b. Submissions taken at Pennsic go straight to Laurel.**
- c. All Kingdoms take submissions at Pennsic.**
- d. If the heralds at Pennsic don't find conflict with my submission it will pass because that's all the heralds who check, together in one place and so Laurel will know it's okay.**

Not all Kingdoms accept submissions at Pennsic. And which do can vary from year to year. The same is true of other wars. Also, items submitted at wars go through the same procedure as items submitted through your local pursuivant/kingdom. The downside to submitting at wars is that because they were submitted along with a lot of others, they may take a month or so longer to process than is otherwise normal. The upside to submitting at wars is that the submission will probably stand a better chance of passing, because they have probably been looked over by a larger number of more experienced heralds.

8. If you resubmit, you don't have to pay.

This varies from Kingdom to Kingdom. While the Laurel office does not require any payment for resubmissions, Kingdoms are allowed to, so as to cover the costs of handling the paperwork. However, no Kingdom can charge for resubmissions made within a year of a submission's return. Some Kingdoms charge after the 1 year grace period, others give a longer period. In Calontir submitters have one year following a return to resubmit without having to repay.

9. To hold court, you must have a warranted herald.

This will vary by local custom and Kingdom by Kingdom. Some places require such, some do not. Calontir does not require someone to be a warranted herald to handle court.

10. According to Corpora, the herald is the deputy seneschal and has to step in should the seneschal be unable to perform their duties.

This is false. This is not in Corpora. While a Kingdom could put such into Kingdom law, no known Kingdom has to my knowledge.

11. The main reason the SCA College of Arms requires the standardized, color-fast medium of Crayola Classic Markers to be used when emblazoning (coloring in) heraldry forms is based on the system used by Laurel and some Kingdoms for conflict checking. The new submitted item is often simply held up along side the item it potentially conflicts with and people look at it from a distance and see if they can be told apart.

This is incorrect. First, the College of Arms does not require that Crayola Classic Markers be used on forms...but does recommend the use of some sort of watercolor markers as they are stable color-wise. Crayola Classic Markers are very accessible and inexpensive and meet the needs of being color-fast, which is why many folks recommend them. But that specific brand is not required to be used. The reason a color-fast medium is desired is that usually some ten or more people will handle every single submission before it's registered. It'll be mailed three times, minimum, across several climate zones and often into amazingly different weather patterns. Then it'll be filed forever. The colors used have to stay identifiable so the heralds can verify that the blazon (written description) matches the emblazon (colored picture) and is correct. If you mail purple and the receiver gets blue because your ink faded in less than a week, that's a major problem. (And yes, the College of Arms has seen many examples like this.) All but the most expensive markers will alter some, but as long as change is minute and the colors are still identifiable as a hue of their original color, that's perfectly fine. Watercolor markers are pretty darned stable and why they are highly recommended.

Regular wax crayons and metallic markers can cause problems with forms sticking together, colors changing, color flaking or rubbing off and so on. Thus crayons and metallics are NOT recommended and the use of such could cause a return of a submission for a re-draw.

To help your submission have the best chance: when selecting the shade to use on the forms, make sure the red does not have an orange tinge to it. Use a bright (but not pale) yellow for gold (even if you plan to use a metallic shade when you make banners, etc). Make sure the purple is not too blue or too red in appearance. Never use a pastel shade on the form...utilize a rich shade of the colors.

Second, the College of Arms rarely utilizes conflict-checking by visual means. The primary means of conflict checking is via comparison of the designs utilizing the blazons (written descriptions) and applying the Standards for Evaluation of Names and Armory (SENA) to determine if there is a conflict. Usually the only time a visual test is applied is when you've got identical or very, VERY nearly identical tinctures AND very nearly identical outline in the designs. It's extremely rare. Laurel visually checks everything the CoA asks for, but most of the time it is not an issue and the check proves that. Additionally, when a visual check is done, it is usually done from a relatively short distance (ranging from 1' to 6').

12. You cannot use washable markers on submission forms.

Untrue. The requirements for colored submission forms are clarity of color and durability. The Administrative Handbook section IV.C.1. states that, "The preferred medium for colored armory sets is watercolor markers such as Crayola Classic Markers." These are given as an example, and are a good one, but many brands of markers are acceptable, and 'classic' is the color set (primaries), not a designator of washability.

So long as your purple is truly purple, your red is red and neither pink nor orange, your yellow not orange, and your blue true blue and not teal or any other shade that blurs the line between the heraldic tincture intended and another color, the colors are fine. Durability is important; forms are not archived immediately, they are handled quite a bit during the submission process. Markers, intended for the use of active children, survive well the sort of handling the forms will get.

Washable ink does not come off paper; it's supposed to come off skin and out of some clothing. If your markers provide color which is strong and true, they should be fine.

Do not use paint, pastels or wax crayons. Paint flakes off, pastels and crayons melt and stick the pages together, possibly ruining the forms in the process. Do not use highlighters as forms are scanned and highlighter color will not scan, leaving all such colored areas white on the scan. Do not use metallics, they do not scan and might flake off the paper and do not show true on the form with gold turning bronze or brown

and silver going gray, pink, blue or black depending on what the particles were suspended in.

SCA General Information Myths

1. You have to have a name and armory before attending your first event.

This is false. There is no such requirement.

2. You need a persona name to authorize to fight.

This can vary from Kingdom to Kingdom. While there may be a need to record a name, so that Kingdom records show who is authorized, a person should be able to use their real name as opposed to a persona name.

3. You can't have purple clothing because they're reserved to royalty.

This is false. The SCA has no such restriction. This might possibly be a confusion from some of the Renaissance Faires that state that *only* the Queen may wear purple -- no one else among the official performers is allowed even a scrap of purple ribbon unless the Queen gave it to them. (Of course, this, like other "costume rules", doesn't apply *AT ALL* to paying customers.)

4. Plain, unadorned red, green and yellow belts are reserved for squires, apprentices and proteges respectively.

This is a matter of local custom. This "reservation" has been customary but not written in any Kingdom Law. It is possible for a Kingdom to add it to their Kingdom Law, if desired.

5. Anyone in the SCA can wear a simple unadorned circlet.

This varies by Kingdom Law and local custom. [Recently the Laurel Office tried to rule that such regalia was not restricted. However a BoD ruling overturned this, stating that the Laurel Office couldn't legislate regalia that wasn't for SCA-wide orders. Thus, it has returned to the status of being up to Kingdom law and custom.]

6. The Academy of St. Gabriel charges money.

This is false. They do NOT charge for their services. The Academy of St. Gabriel is a group of volunteers who research medieval names and armory. Their primary purpose is to assist members of the Society for Creative Anachronism to find historically accurate medieval names and coats of arms for use in SCA activities. Their contact info is located at: <http://www.s-gabriel.org/index.html>

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Archived SCAHRLDS List e-mail collected by Daniel de Lincolia

SCAHRLDS List discussions, Academy of St. Gabriel discussions and SCA event discussions including (but

not limited to) these people: AElfwyn aet Gywrum, Alan Fairfax, Alanna of Volchevo Lesa, Alasdair MacEogan, Alison Macdermot, Alisoun MacCoul of Elphane, Amanda of Coldcastle, Anguss Scrymgeour, Antonio Miguel Santos de Borja, Arval D'Espas Nord, Aryanhwy Prytydes merch Catmael Caermyrdin, Astrid Thorkelsdottir, Athenais Bryennissa, Banba MacDermott, Barak Raz, Beautrice Hammeltoune, Betony ferch Meilyr ap Emrys, Blaise de Cormeilles, Briana Etain MacKorkhill, Bronwen o Gydweli, Bruce Draconarius of Mistholme, Caelin of Andred, Calum Ra'arsach mac Leoid, Cat of Castlemere, Caterina, Cathal, Ceatt o Guleleth, Charles Stewart O'Connor, Christian de Holacombe, Christopher Thomas, Clarissa Wykeham, Damien of Baden, Daniel de Lincolia, Da'ud ibn Auda, Devnet macShiehie, Dierdre, Dmitrii Volkovich, Donal Galbraith, Dorcas Whitecap, Drogo the Forgetful, Duncan MacConacher, Eadric Flecher The Wild, Effric neyn Kenyeoch vc Ralte, Eilidh Swann, Eloine ni Mhaoileoin, Elisabeth de Rossignol, Elizabeth Braidwood, Elsbeth Anne Roth, Elspeth inghean Dougall, Eogan mac Ailpein, Ermenrich von Duisburg, Etienne de St. Amaranth, Evan da Collaureo, Fergus Stout, Fi MacKenzie, Frithiof Silversparre, Gawain of Miskbridge, Genevieve la flechiere, Ghislaine d'Auxerre, Giles of Redheugh, Giulietta da Venezia, Gorm of Berra, Gotfrid von Schwaben, Gwalchmai Saethydd, Hartmann Rogge, Herveus d'Ormonde, Hywel ap Ieuan, Iona Lynch, Isabella Benalcazar, Ivanor M'Quhairr of Sighy Crag, Jacqueline de Meux, Jaelle of Armida, Jadwiga Marina Majewska, Jadwiga Zajackowa, James of the Lake, James the Mercer, Johan Magnusson Kivisuo, Julien de Monfort, Kwellend-Njal Kolskeggson, Lindorm Eriksson, Livia Montgomery, Llygoden Llwyd, Lothar von Katzenellenbogen, Lyle FitzWilliam, Madoc Arundel, Madawc Caradawg, Marcello Caprioli, Margaret Makafee, Maridonna Benvenuti, Marten Bröker, Martinus Draco Byzantios, Maryn Grey, Mongke Gal, Morgana yr Oerfa, Naitan de Yerdeburc, Nastasiia (Tasha) Ivanova Medvedeva, Owen ap Morgan, Pedro de Alcazar, Pendar the Bard, Perronnelle Charette de La Tour du Pin, Predslava Vydrina, Quintonus Alexander, Rafaella d'Allemtejo, Ramon de la Luna, Raonull Modar, Raphael Karl der Heidelberger, Raphael van Antwerpen, Rayah Blackstar, Robert the Bald, Roberto Carlos Dominguez, Rodrigo, Rory, Rouland Carr, Rys, Sandor Dosa, Seraphina MacDonald, Seumas Fraser, Shauna of Carrick Point, Sofya la Rus, Solveig Thronardsdottir, Sorchu MacLeod, Sven Noren, Talan Gwynek, Tangwystyl, verch Morgant Glasvryn, Teceangl Bach, Thomas Blackmoor, Thomas the Black, Þorfinn Hrolfsson, Tibor of Rock Valley, Tibor the Indecisive, Tristan ap Syrddin of Ellesmere, Twilleliah nic Taillier, Vasili iz Naitemneshoi Dollina, Walraven van Nijmegen and Zenobia Naphtali

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