

Heraldic Consultation

Some thoughts from doing heraldic consultation in diverse conditions.

By Brunissende Dragonette, former Blue Tyger Herald.

Being a warranted herald means that you can receive money for people's submissions and forward it with the required paperwork to the Eastern Crown Herald (or the Badger Herald, if you live in Canada).

Before the blessed moment when you get to mail the paperwork, there is the consultation, which can be easy, or not easy at all. Remember that, as the submitting herald, you don't have to know everything and can ask questions. Feel free to ask, for instance, how to document what the submitter wants, or about administrative trivia. The East Kingdom heralds' discussion list is a great resource and you can join it by sending an email to ekheralds-subscribe@eastkingdom.org.

I. Find a place for the consultation

Consultations can occur at various places. Whether you are a local pursuivant or a pursuivant at large, you can organize consultation tables at events and meet people at practices and workshops.

Most event stewards will allow consultation tables at their events. The minimum you need is a table for books, forms, and pens. Access to electricity and the internet will allow onsite conflict checking and viewing of online documentation. You will meet more people while consulting at events, which is a great advantage. Even if you don't have the time or opportunity to do the complete consultation, you can exchange contact information and get a brief description of what the consultant is looking for. Smaller venues, where you will meet fewer people, encourage more peaceful and in-depth consulting.

Another way to consult with people is by email, and sometimes this is more convenient. It gives you the time to research challenging issues in more depth. It also gives the submitter more time to think and decide.

II. Listen

The first thing you need to do is listen to your consultant. The requests can be diverse and you need to make sure you understand precisely what the person wants. In this step you can learn what elements of the submission are most important to the submitter, if the submission has any likelihood of being registered, and what the submitter would allow the College of Arms to modify for registerability.

You will meet different types of submitters: some have used a name for years and are adamant about not allowing changes to it; some want to register a device and only care about the name as an administrative requirement; some have a precise idea of what they want; some are not individuals, but new groups with more enthusiasm than knowledge; and some come to you simply looking for direction.

This is a good time to tell your submitters about the submission process, and what characteristics allow a name and device to be registered.

III. Document

Next, you will need to check the rules for submissions. The condition *sine qua none* for your submission to go through the whole process is to follow the rules for submission (Rfs). Always keep the Rfs where you can find them easily. You can also bookmark the following link: <http://heraldry.sca.org/laurel/rfs.html> .

Device submissions generally don't need to be documented unless they use a charge new to the SCA, or use a specific element that appears *a priori* to violate the rules for submission, but can be explained in some acceptable way (such as regional examples of arms that violate the rules of tincture).

The two main parts of device submissions are conflict checking and rendering the device. Early conflict checking will help your submitter, since you can detect issues before the submission and avoid some returns. However, there will also be conflict checking during the commenting process. You can find a short checklist ("insta-boing") of what can provoke immediate return at <http://heraldry.sca.org/laurel/boing.html> .

Examples of the way to draw heraldic charges can be found in period rolls of arms (many of them found only) or the pictorial dictionary. Information about heraldic

style and grammar can be found on the educative pages of the Laurel site at <http://heraldry.sca.org/heraldry/laurel/education.html#Armory> .

Names generally need more documentation. In fact, lack of documentation is a cause for administrative return. Every component of a Society name must be documented as being compatible with period naming practices or otherwise registerable. Not all names sources are acceptable for registering SCA names. The Laurel site is an excellent source of useful information: <http://heraldry.sca.org/heraldry/laurel/names.html>.

Essentially, a name needs (at least) 2 elements that are compatible temporarily (both elements are dated less than 300 years apart) and geographically (both elements belong to cultures close enough to allow cross-cultural names). Missing one of these conditions is considered a step from period practice (sometimes called a “weirdness”) and more than one step from period practice renders the name unregisterable. Looking at period examples encourages more authentic names, just as this research encourages more authentic devices. Name documentation doesn’t need to be voluminous. It should justify the submission as simply as possible.

Submitted names, like devices, need to be sufficiently different from the ones already registered. The rules for submission explain how to determine the required difference. The list of the names and devices registered and protected in the SCA can be found in the SCA armorial at <http://heraldry.sca.org/OandA/>.

IV. Explain

Ideally, you find the wanted armory does not conflict with anything registered or you easily find the documentation for the name your consultant wants. Explain to the submitter what you have chosen and describe the documentation. This might seem unnecessary, but it’s a good occasion to educate. They may pass on whatever you tell them about proper documentation to others who want to register their names or devices.

V. Check

Always make sure that the consultant agrees with the name and/or drawing that you are sending away. In the case of a submission for a group device and/or name, you will need a petition that describes what is being submitted (name and arms).

VI. Complete the paperwork and mail it

You will need the submission forms. They can be found here: <http://ech.eastkingdom.org/#subs>.

You will need to send 2 copies of each name's documentation (that's the official form and potentially supplemental information).

You'll also need to send one outline drawing (black and white version with none of the components of the drawing filled) and 3 color copies for a device or badge submission.

Don't forget the check! Checks are made payable to "SCA Inc. - East Kingdom College of Heraldry" in an amount totaling \$8.00 per submitted item (for example, one name, one device, and one badge would be \$24.00).

VII. Now what?

The submission is going to go to the internal submission herald: Eastern Crown Herald. Devices and badges will be scanned. All documentation will be summarized. These will be used to assemble an internal letter of intent (ILoI). The ILoI can be found on Eastern Crown's page: <http://ech.eastkingdom.org/#loi>.

The next step is internal commenting. For about a month people with varying competencies will try to improve and strengthen the submission and find problems that would prevent registration. No herald has an obligation to comment, but it's an excellent exercise.

Once commenting closes, Eastern Crown decides which submissions to forward to the upper level (Laurel, also called Society), and which to return for further work. Mural Herald communicates these decisions to the submitters, but the decisions are also published in a Letter of Decision (LoD) at <http://ech.eastkingdom.org/#loi> (second column). It is always a good thing to get the information to the submitter as soon as it's officially released: informing consultants about Kingdom-level decisions as soon as you can find them on the Eastern Crown site will make for happy customers. Do it.

Names and devices that have passed the Kingdom level are then included in an external Letter of Intent (xLoI) for a new round of commenting from out-of-Kingdom

heralds. This round of commenting will last 3 months. At the end of this commenting period, decisions will be made separately for the names submissions and heraldry submissions. Once a month, submissions from all Kingdoms are decided in the same meeting. The Pelican Sovereign of Arms decides whether to register each name. The Wreath Sovereign decides whether to register each heraldry submission.

Once they have made these decisions, it takes a few more months before the Sovereigns of Arms issue the Letter of Acceptances and Returns (LoAR). This delay is necessary to check information, solve administrative issues, make one coherent document of decisions made independently, and proofread the LoAR before it is made available to all. Each LoAR can be found on the Laurel Sovereign of Arms site at <http://heraldry.sca.org/heraldry/loar/>, but is also linked from the Eastern Crown site at <http://ech.eastkingdom.org/#loi> (last column). Again, the Mural Herald will do the official notification to the submitter; but again, submitters prefer to get the answer directly from their local herald. I suggest you to inform anyone you know with submissions in a freshly released LoAR of the decisions.

Links to bookmark:

Laurel: <http://heraldry.sca.org/>

Eastern Crown: <http://ech.eastkingdom.org/>

Brigantia: <http://www.eastkingdom.org/heraldry/>

The Academy of Saint Gabriel: <http://www.s-gabriel.org/>

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