

Intermediate Heraldic Research

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Introduction

“Senior” heralds may seem to always have the answers, but that isn’t necessarily the case. What we *do* have is a basic understanding of the naming conventions of many cultures, solid research skills (both how to effectively search for information and how to interpret and evaluate what we find), and a lot of ingenuity and persistence. We also have a good memory for information we’ve seen before, so we have a good chance of finding it again when needed.

So you have Reaney & Wilson and Bahlow. What’s next? Where do you go when the standard sources don’t have what you need? Essentially, once you get to a certain level of expertise, you need to use more primary sources and to start thinking outside of the box

Making the Most of No-Photocopy Sources for Names Research

If you can’t find the exact spelling you want, check common spelling variants for that language. Even if we can’t exactly document the desired spelling, we might be able to construct it or *interpolate* it from similar names with similar derivations:

While Ingoldisthorpe is undated, it can be interpolated given forms like Ingeldesthorp and Ingaldisthorp, both dated to t. Edward III. [Crispin Ingoldisthorpe, March 2011]

Some languages use certain letters interchangeably, like i/y in English, or i/y/j in Polish. Some languages also modify names according to the context, e.g., putting it in the genitive case. Keep that in mind when you are running a search. If you understand the grammar and spelling rules for that language, you have more potential search terms, and can use the modified form to “reverse engineer” the unmodified, nominative form of the name.

Books like R&W and Bahlow aren’t just useful for finding attested (documented) spellings. They can also be used to find naming patterns and parts of names (themes) that can be combined to form new names. In particular, take time to get to know the introduction to R&W. It includes topics like marked patronyms and other names of relationship, the use of prepositions in names, and how the naming patterns changed over time. It is the most concise, readily available overview of English naming practices.

As long as the names can be constructed in the same way that attested names were, then we can likely get it through. We see this most often with given names and place names/locative bynames. For example, a recent submitter wanted the given name *Arnvaldr*, which is not attested. However, *Arn-* is a documented prototheme (first element), found in names like *Arnlaugr*, *Arnaldr*, and *Arnoddr*. In addition, the deutertheme (second element) *-valdr* is found in names like *Þorvaldr*, *Ósvaldr*, and *Gunnvaldr*. Therefore, the name was constructed like other period names, and was justified on that basis, rather than having been found in historical records.

Non-Standard Sources

Names

Everyone knows to check their name books. But names can be found in a number of places:

- Literature
- Church and municipal records
- Lyrics
- Period maps (for locative bynames)
- Armorial
- Inscriptions on coins and other artifacts

Armory

It may seem obvious, but our best sources are period armorials. Don't look to Victorian books on heraldry for the last word on depictions and conventions – they do not necessarily reflect period practice. You can also find armory in the margins and end pages of other period manuscripts (e.g., I've copied heraldic depictions from fencing manuals and book stamps).

If you want to document something that was not used as a charge in period heraldry (or even modern heraldry, for that matter), it becomes more complicated. European artifacts, plants, and the like are fairly easy to document for a defining instance. There are many possible sources:

- Museum collections (art in various media)
- Finds databases (from metal detector enthusiasts)
- Illuminated manuscripts
- Botanical manuscripts

Non-European flora and fauna are more complicated still. Not only do we need to show that they are compatible with the SCA's time period, we need to show that Europeans knew of them. This is where persistence is needed. The Portuguese and Dutch colonized parts of Asia, so many of the available records were not in English. That's when you to get creative and start to think outside of the box – for example, looking into the types of cultural exchange at the time. That led me to thinking of trade goods, which was the key to helping the submitter get what he wanted:

There was some question about the registerability of Japanese maple leaves and whether they were known to Europeans in period. Eastern Crown provided some research into the question, which is summarized here:

In the late Ming period (1368-1644), Chinese porcelains were exported to Europe and Japan by the Dutch and Portuguese, and earlier to the Middle East. Japanese imari ware was first exported by the Dutch East India company c. 1650, with more than 50,000 pieces exported by 1659. Maples were listed as a common motif in imari ware. [Goro Shimura, *The Story of Imari: The Symbols and Mysteries of Antique Japanese Porcelain*; <http://books.google.com/books?id=p9JqaKSNah4C&pg=PA25>]

An example of 16th C (Momoyama Period) lacquerware that was produced for the European market is in the Kyoto Museum [http://www.kyohaku.go.jp/eng/syuzou/meihin_%83%7B%83%5E%83%93%83%7D%83b%83v%8C%C3%82%A2/urusi/item03.html]. The item description is: "This chest is an example

of 'Nanban (Southern Barbarian) lacquerware,' produced for the European market....The lid and body of this chest are decorated with designs of birds and animals, including...maple...The great number of existing examples suggest that a large number of such export chests were produced to order for Europeans."

Therefore, we are giving the submitter the benefit of the doubt: Japanese maple leaves are allowed as flora native to Asia, but known to Europeans in period. They will be considered artistic variants of European maple leaves, blazoned, but not granting difference.

There is a step from period practice for use of the Japanese maple leaves, which are non-European flora not known to be used as charges in period European heraldry [Gillian MacLachlan de Holrode, September 2009].

Fine Tuning

Often, I need to filter my results so that I can eliminate many of the irrelevant hits. I have several ways of doing this:

- Add "medieval" in whatever language you are working in, e.g., mittelalter in German, médiévale in French – this is especially helpful in Google when looking for names.
- For sites with many digitized manuscripts, search for terms like wappenbuch (in German) or Wapenboek (Dutch) to bring up mostly armorials.
- When searching for names, when you want to get mostly period records instead of everything under the sun, add a personal name commonly found in that language in period (but not as much mundanely) like Johannes or Jehan.

Other heralds have other "tricks" that they use.

Favorite Online Sources

Wikipedia - <http://www.wikipedia.org/>

No, really.

Wikipedia is a wonderful tool for spot checking uncontroversial information: Was this person alive prior to 1650? Was this town found in period? Approximately where was this town located? What language or dialect was spoken there in period?

But what most people don't realize is that it often includes images from period sources and links to the primary sources themselves. For example, the entry on Nuremberg includes a 1648 map, which you can zoom in and read the place names found in it. Another image is from the *Nuremberg Chronicle*. When you click on it, that image (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Schedelsche_Weltchronik_d_122.jpg) includes a link to the artist's Wiki page (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Hartmann_Schedel). That page includes a copy of the 1493 manuscript itself, fully digitized (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Schedelsche_Weltchronik).

It is also a great place to find more search terms, like alternate spellings of a particular person's name. For example, the botanist Gaspard Bauhin was also known as Caspar Bauhin. So if you know you want to locate one of his manuscripts, check under both names.

Check the "External Links" section – you can frequently find digitized copies of manuscripts and books that can be used as primary sources for documentation. Cite those rather than Wiki.

Lastly, Wiki's a gold mine of information on linguistics and grammar.

Google – <http://www.google.com>

Google Books is especially useful, as are the image searches. For full access documents, the settings icon (the little gear) gives access to the plain text version – that allows you to cut and paste the text directly.

The Laurel website – <http://heraldry.sca.org>

If you know you're looking for a particular search term, you can search the entire site by Googling *site:heraldry.sca.org "search term"*. For example, *site:heraldry.sca.org "flames proper"*. (This works for any domain, by the way!) This gets you precedents, LoARs, etc.

Middle English Dictionary - <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/med/>

Use *Search the MED quotations* to search for exact elements, like a given name (e.g., Helena)

Use *Lookups: Headwords and Forms* to search for themes, which would be used in compound names (e.g, wode)

Library of Congress - <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/gnrlmapquery.html> (search)

The LoC has a nice collection of digitized maps from period, for example Baptista Boazio's *Irlandiæ c. 1606 = Irlandiæ accurata descriptio*, and Abraham Ortelius' *Theatrum orbis terrarum*. The best part is that you can zoom in.

The Online Froissart - <http://www.hrionline.ac.uk/onlinefroissart/>

This site has searchable transcriptions of multiple 14th and 15th century manuscripts of Jean Froissart's *Chroniques*. It has many personal names and place names.

Note: The English translations are normalized (use modern, standardized spellings), but the French transcriptions retain the original spellings.

Bibliothèque nationale de France - <http://gallica.bnf.fr/?lang=EN>

Under Advanced Search, put in your search term(s) (I usually search the text), but change the end publication date to 1650 to try to get only period hits.

There is a “Detailed information” button when you are viewing a document that provides the author, publication year, etc.

When viewing most documents, you can search the contents to get the right page. There’s an arrow that’s usually on the far left – click that, and it opens up a search pane.

Family Search - <https://familysearch.org/>

This is the site for the International Genealogical Index (IGI) parish extracts that have really changed the face of SCA names research. You can filter by birth, marriage, or death year, as well as the basic location (e.g., Continental Europe).

Note that not all records are acceptable as documentation. You want the extracted records only – anything submitted by an LDS member is not acceptable – and certain batches of records are not reliable:

If using the IGI search directly from the familysearch.org site, you must make sure that the batch number indicates that the records are from an extraction program and that the source of the records is acceptable. A description of the batch numbers can be found at https://www.familysearch.org/learn/wiki/en/IGI_Batch_Number_Descriptions. In general batches beginning with C, J, K, M (except M17 and M18), or P are acceptable. When citing an IGI record be sure to include the batch number. [Sybilla Julianna Detweiler, February 2012]

Corpus of Electronic Texts (CELT) Archive - <http://www.ucc.ie/celt/>

Many of the annals used in preparing Mari Elspeth nic Bryan’s “Index of Names in Irish Annals” (our best source for Gaelic names) are found at the CELT Archive. Quite frequently, it has both Gaelic transcriptions and English translations.

Note: Do not rely on the English translations for spellings. These names have been normalized. Use the Gaelic for documentation, and then include the English translation as well. (We require non-English documentation to be translated. Also include the line number you are citing if there is one.) For example:

Gaelic transcription of *Annála Connacht*: <http://www.ucc.ie/celt/online/G100011.html>

English translation of *Annála Connacht*: <http://www.ucc.ie/celt/online/T100011/>

Gaelic transcription of *The Annals of Ulster*: <http://www.ucc.ie/celt/published/G100001C/>

English translation of *The Annals of Ulster*: <http://www.ucc.ie/celt/published/T100001C/>

Note the naming convention in the examples above: “G” means it is a Gaelic document, and “T” means it is a translation. It’s possible to guess the right URL if you need to switch from one to the other.

In addition, look for the link for *Background details and bibliographic information*. This section will tell you the identifying information and age of the manuscript that was transcribed, and the language (e.g., Middle English with some Latin). It’s important to note the language, as it affects whether we can use certain spellings for other parts of

the name. Even if a particular manuscript was created later, e.g., the 16th century, it's possible that it retains older spellings. Knowing the language would be able to tell you whether that is the case.

Cartographica Neerlandica - <http://www.orteliusmaps.com/index.html>

This site has transcriptions of the place names found in Ortelius' *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum*, which was the world's first atlas.

British History Online - <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/>

This site must be used with care, as documents have usually been translated from the original language, or are post-period, general histories. However, there are many documents that preserve the original spellings, even if the rest of the document has been altered. How to tell? Look for archaic spellings and spelling variations, like the ubiquitous i/y switches:

“Robert Mouter of Somercotes co. Lincoln and William Blake of New Sarum co. Wiltesir to John Spryngthorp clerk. Recognisance for 60s., to be levied etc. in the counties aforesaid.”
(‘Close Rolls, Henry V: October 1418’, Calendar of Close Rolls, Henry V: volume 1: 1413-1419 (1929), pp. 508-512. URL: <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=108842&strquery=warwickshire>)

Since this was a close roll, the original document is most likely in Latin. The spelling “Spryngthorp” seems to retain the original spelling. However, I would expect the given names to have been Latinized (e.g., *Robertus*). As a result, I would take the given names with a grain of salt. If I wanted to check to be sure, I’d have to find that document’s Latin transcription.

Note: some of the site is source documents can only be accessed if you have a subscription.

UK Detector Finds Database - <http://www.ukdfd.co.uk/> and Portable Antiquities Scheme – <http://finds.org.uk/database>

These are good sources for small artifacts, like buttons and buckles. That way, if a submitter wants a depiction that differs from the defining instance, you can show that the emblazon is modeled after a period example.

The National Archives (UK) - <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/default.htm>

This is just like it sounds. However, it also contains *very* useful educational information:

- Interactive tutorials and other resources, such as beginner and advanced Latin, how to read and decipher old handwriting, and currency converters - <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/records/reading-old-documents.htm>
- Overall education site for teachers and students - <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/education/>
- How to use and evaluate primary sources - <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/education/students/primary-sources.htm>

Botanicus - <http://botanicus.org/>

Digitized botanical manuscripts are useful to document defining instances of plants. They can show up whether Europeans knew of certain plants, and if a manuscript has images, what they looked like in period depictions.

St. Gallen, Stiftsbibliothek - <http://www.e-codices.unifr.ch/en/search/csg>

Digitized manuscripts.

Period armorials

- Die Wappenbücher der Bruderschaft St. Christoph am Arlberg - <http://www.bruderschaft-st-christoph.org/de/wappenbuecher>
- Wapenboek Beyeren - <http://www.kb.nl/bladerboek/wapenboek/index.html>
- Bayerische Staatsbibliothek/Münchener DigitalisierungsZentrum Digitale Bibliothek - <http://www.digitale-sammlungen.de/index.html?suchbegriff=wappenbuch&c=suchen>
and
<http://codicon.digitale-sammlungen.de/treff2feld.html?feld1=class&anfrage1=%22Heraldik%22&suche-in=bsb00001353&suche-in=inventicon&wahl=sucheTief> (already filtered)

OSCAR – <http://oscar.sca.org>

Check OSCAR first for name elements. Someone might have already documented what you want, so why do extra work when you don't have to? Or, you can see if it was registered or not, and why not. If something needed more documentation, you would know that up front and could proactively fill in the gaps.

Some of us also have access to the scans of the documentation copies, so we can print them to PDF and email them to heralds who want to include them in another submission. Failing that, the Laurel archivist can provide copies from the files.

Aryanhwy merch Catmael's "Database of medieval names" - <http://www.ellipsis.cx/~liana/names/database/>

Ary has been indexing the names found in articles written for the Academy of Saint Gabriel (<http://www.s-gabriel.org>). Not all names are there yet, but it's a good starting point. It's arranged by the most common spelling. Just click the name you want, and it will take you to a page with variant spellings by geographic location, with links to the articles where they were found. So, if you want to find out which form of the name *August* was used in Italy, for example, it might be a place to start.

Note that this is a work in progress. Also be sure not to use the database itself as the documentation. Instead, go to the actual article that contains the name.

"A Brief, Incomplete, and Rather Stopgap Article about European Household and Other Group Names Before 1600" by Effric Neyn Ken3ocht Mcherrald - <http://medievalscotland.org/names/eurohouseholds/index.shtml>

This article consolidates information on household name patterns in various locations (e.g., England and France), as well as the articles that document them.