HERALDRY FOR THE FIELD

By

Lord Alden Drake

Herald-At-Large, Ansteorra
Pursuivant, Trimaris

Table of Contents

1. HERALDIC GARB............................................................................................................. 2
   1.1. The Shield............................................................................................................... 2
   1.2. Surcoats and Tabards............................................................................................... 2
       1.2.1. Heraldic Surcoat........................................................................................... 2
       1.2.2. Heraldic Tabard........................................................................................... 2
       1.2.3. Garb Patterns............................................................................................... 2
2. HERALDIC BANNERS ....................................................................................................... 3
3. TOURNAMENT ITEMS....................................................................................................... 3
   3.1. Favors .................................................................................................................... 3
   3.2. Honor Shields .......................................................................................................... 3
   3.3. Heraldry for the Helm............................................................................................... 3
       3.3.1. Crests .............................................................................................................. 3
       3.3.2. Torse and Mantle........................................................................................... 4
       3.3.3. Additional Decoration..................................................................................... 4
4. Personal Heralds............................................................................................................. 4
   4.1. Short-term Herald.................................................................................................... 5
   4.2. Long-term Herald.................................................................................................... 5
5. ARMS TO RECOGNIZE ..................................................................................................... 5
6. BASICS OF FIELD HERALDRY .................................................................................. 6
7. REFERENCES .................................................................................................................. 6
1. HERALDIC GARB

1.1. The Shield
Your shield is likely to be your first piece of heraldic garb, and it is the first place where you can begin hiding mundanity. Since most shields are made of either plywood or metal, painting your device on its service can help to hide the obviously modern material. Additionally, it is the primary means by which you are identified on the field. Since armor and helms obscure the features and shape of the person underneath, it helps to be able to easily identify a person by the shield they carry.

**Pointer One:**
Wait until you have your shield properly hung and balanced for fighting before you go through all the work of decorating it. You don’t want to spend hours decorating your shield only to then have to drill all new holes and move bolts, etc., that could mar your decoration.

**Pointer Two:**
Before you paint on your surface, cover it with a layer of primer. This will help to seal the material (especially wood), and will keep the colors bright.

**Pointer Three:**
If you aren’t a terrific artist, don’t despair. An easy way to transfer your design onto your shield (or anything else for that matter), is to use an overhead projector and project the design onto the surface of the shield. Trace it on, and you’re good to go.

1.2. Surcoats and Tabards

1.2.1. Heraldic Surcoat
In addition to wearing your device on your shield, you can wear it directly on your person in the form of a heraldic surcoat. There are some pros and cons with regard to wearing a surcoat (especially during Ansteorran summers). The pros for wearing heraldic surcoats are that it can be used to hide non-period armor, identifies you when you don’t have a shield, and adds greatly to style and appearance. The main con for wearing a heraldic surcoat is that it is another layer of fabric draped over you that adds weight and usually heat. If a surcoat is made to fit correctly however, it should not restrict any movement.

1.2.2. Heraldic Tabard
A personal herald will be the person who will wear your heraldic tabard. Having a herald, dressed in your arms, is a great persona element, and greatly lends to the atmosphere of events (not necessarily restricted to tournaments). In your service, the herald speaks on your behalf (and with your authority), so it is important to attire your herald in your arms, so everyone knows who the herald is working for.

1.2.3. Garb Patterns
There are several patterns to use when designing heraldic garb. One of the most popular pattern sets is Period Patterns #101 – Medieval Military Garments, and Period Patterns #102 – More Medieval Military Garments. These patterns are readily available on the web and through some merchants at events.

These garments can be made as elaborate as you desire, but keep in mind how they will be used when you make them. For surcoats and field tabards, use natural fiber fabrics that will breathe. Lining these garments is optional; if you do line them, consider the added weight of the fabric. You might also want a fine dress surcoat and a court tabard, which are made out of richer material and more elaborate decoration, since they aren’t as likely to get beat on or sweat-stained.
2. HERALDIC BANNERS
Included in this class is a reprint of the Tournaments Illuminated article on Banners.

3. TOURNAMENT ITEMS

3.1. Favors
The true gallant fights not for himself, but for the honor of another (yes, the Crown too, and the kingdom, and ok - maybe a little bit for himself). Quite often the person you are willing to take the field, and get battered and bruised, for will present you with a favor. While not necessarily a “heraldic” element, it is a visual decoration that shows the fighter to be gallant and chivalrous.

The most common favor is worn on the belt, but they are not limited to that location. The favor is usually made by the person bestowing it to the fighter, and has been decorated in some fashion, that it might identify the giver. Initials, badges, devices, or other identifying symbols, are either sewn, embroidered, painted, or somehow applied to the favor. Generally, it is left up to the skills and talents of the giver to present a favor that is symbolic of their person.

Favors can also be worn to represent groups, such as households, branches, fighting companies, etc., who support and encourage the fighter. Some branch champions may wear a favor of the branch, while a tournament company may wear a favor bearing the company’s badge.

3.2. Honor Shields
In some tournaments, combatants are requested to bring an honor shield. These miniature shields are displayed on a “tree” as indication of the combatant’s entry in the tournament, and sometimes to show pairings of the fights to take place.

The construction of an honor shield is very simple:
• A standard honor shield is a heater shape, cut out of ¼-inch plywood to size of 8-inches x 10-inches (approximate).
• At the midpoint, roughly ¾ to 1 inch down from the top edge, drill a hole that is 3/16 to 1/4 inch in diameter. Most honor shields get hung on a nail by this hole.
• After cutting out the shape, sand the surfaces and edges to a smooth finish and wipe clean.
• Apply a base coat of white primer to the shield face and edges (it is not necessary to prime the back, but you can if you prefer).
• Once the primer has dried, you will transfer the image of your device onto the surface. This can be done by freehand drawing, using carbon paper and tracing over your design, or by using an overhead projector and tracing the image (whatever way works best for your design).
• Paint the design, using acrylic paint. Use only proper heraldic colors (red, blue, black, green, purple, white, yellow). Silver and Gold paint may be substituted.

3.3. Heraldry for the Helm

3.3.1. Crests
Some tournaments are accompanied by a crest gallery. Here, fighters place their decorated helms on tables to be viewed by the public. Quite often a prize will be given for the best-decorated crest.

In Ansteorra, a crest is added to a person’s heraldic achievement when they have received a Grant Level award, however, there is seldom a remark made to someone not of Grant Level, who displays a crest in a gallery.
Possible crest designs are too numerous to list in the scope of this class, but suffice it to say that just about anything you could use as either a charge on the shield, a supporter, or a badge, can be used as a crest. Keep in mind that a crest is “fieldless” and so any multiple object crests need to be conjoined (touching). Materials used for constructing a crest are likewise numerous; papier-mâché, wood, fabric, models, decoys, antlers, baskets, stuffed animals, cups, etc. have all been used to create a crest.

It is the rare fighter who can afford to have a separate helm to use as a crest/display helm, in addition to a fighting helm, so how you affix the crest to your helm is also something to consider. If you don’t want to drill holes into your helm to screw your crest on, consider using magnets (hidden under the crest). Avoid duct taping your crest on. You might also shape the mount of your crest to fit the domed top of your helm so the crest simply sits on top.

3.3.2. Torse and Mantle
To accompany your crest, you may want to have a torse and mantle. Usually seen on a heraldic achievement, the torse is a braid, or twist, of two colors (taken from your device) which encircles the helm. Connected to the torse (or held in place by it) is the mantle – the flowing leafy-cloak-like structure that billows out to surround the shield in a coat of arms. Made from the same colors as the torse, the mantle drapes over the back and sides of the helm and is usually cut quite elaborately with dags, or fleur-de-lys.

If your mantle is purely for display, feel free to make it as elaborate as you desire, but if you intend to wear the mantle while fighting, consider the added weight it might add to your helm.

3.3.3. Additional Decoration
Additional elements may be added to the helm, provided the owner has achieved the proper rank and estate. Members of the Order of the Pelican may add a cap of maintenance (red, trimmed in ermine), and royalty/nobility may add a coronet of their station to the helm.

4. Personal Heralds
Now that you’ve decked yourself out in a finely tailored heraldic surcoat, have your arms painted brightly upon your shield, have your banner waving proudly near your period pavilion, you are ready to enter the List. But wait! The entrants are being heralded into the presence of Their Majesties – and you don’t have a herald! Oh, sure, you could give your name to the duly appointed field herald, whose duty it is to introduce the fighters who don’t have a herald, but what kind of impression would that make upon the Crown? The answer? Probably no impression at all. Isn’t that sad? And
following you into the Crown’s presence is the company of Lord John and Lady Jane of Doe, who are preceded by Lord John’s herald, who is dressed in a heraldic tabard, bearing Lord John’s arms. The herald walks forward, leading the procession with words such as these:

“Before Your Stellar Majesties, and the good people of Ansteorra, comes now a man of honor and bravery; Bearer of the King’s Gauntlet, given by His Majesty Miguel I; Recipient of the Sable Crane for service to the kingdom and the Sable Thistle for his skill in Leathercraft; Companion to the Sodality of the Sentinels of the Stargate; And awarded the arms “Gules, a stag trippant argent” by Patrick Michael and Julia; I present – Lord John of Doe! He comes to this field today to fight for honor and chivalry, with his strength and courage fortified by the beauty and grace of Lady Jane, whose favor he bears and whose love he ever strives to prove himself worthy.”

Just as the Royal Herald is the voice for the Crown, your herald (when serving as such) speaks with your voice. If you are unable to attend an event, but your herald can, you may give him a message to deliver on your behalf. You may send your herald out to issue challenges to other fighters. You may send a gift to a landed noble through your herald. There are many uses for a personal herald, which you will negotiate into the contract you make with a person to serve as your herald.

4.1. Short-term Herald

1. If you only need a herald for an upcoming event, get in touch with a herald BEFORE the event and set up your arrangements. Get as much worked out beforehand as possible. You will likely be too occupied to do this the day of the event. You and your herald should work out any formal/informal introductions, what needs to be said/conveyed/presented.

2. At the event, double check and make sure you and your herald are on the same page, properly dressed and presentable, and ready to go.

3. When the services are completed, be generous and repay the herald for his service. A bit of largesse, or food/drink, are very nice gestures, and will very likely keep the herald willing to serve you again in the future.

4.2. Long-term Herald

1. First, determine what your heraldic needs are going to be. Is it for a one-shot event, or a long-term contract? If long-term, will it be limited to tournaments? Will you want a herald to do things for you at events you won’t be able to attend? Before you go out looking for a herald, be sure you know what sort of time requirements you are asking for. Heralds have other interests and responsibilities, just as you do, so if you can give them a better idea of your needs, they can more easily determine if they can be of service, or suggest another who might be more suited towards your needs.

2. When you have in mind what your heraldic needs are, approach a herald. If you need help, talk to your local branch herald. He/She might be able to put you in contact with some voice heralds.

3. Negotiating a contract. The two important factors of contracting a herald are time and payment. How long will you require the service, and how often during that time? Set a limit for yourself and the herald that you can work within. This timeframe can also be used to determine how you will repay the herald for services rendered. How do you pay a herald? The most common payments come in the way of food/drink and material goods (largesse). Payment can be made on an event basis, or at the end of the contracted time. If in doubt, most heralds I know are attracted by chocolate, mead, and shiny objects.

5. ARMS TO RECOGNIZE

While using heraldry goes a long way to looking good, setting the mood of a period persona, and covering up mundane necessities, the primary purpose of heraldry is for RECOGNITION. It is important to know who is a friend, or a foe, in battle. With helms and armor obscuring the usual visual indications of a person’s identity, knowing the device (or arms) a person bears is the easiest way to recognize someone on the field. The accompanying hand-out presents some devices you
should be well familiar with. They are the kingdoms and principalities of the Knowne World, and some of the knights of Ansteorra.

6. BASICS OF FIELD HERALDRY

Field heralds have a considerable amount of work to do for tournaments, along with the List Mistresses. As fighters, the most important thing you need to do with regards to field heraldry is LISTEN to them and follow their instructions.

1. Prior to the tournament beginning, the field herald will likely explain some tournament rules from the List Mistress. This usually involves how the List Mistress wants the outcomes of the bouts to be reported. The fighters themselves (either the victor or defeated) may be asked to report the outcome (usually only one person is asked to report), or the herald may record the outcomes and report. In any case, be sure you are clear on this point.

2. Sometimes the Crown, or presiding noble, will have words at the beginning of the tournament. Be sure to pay attention to them, or their herald, as these words are being given. Tournament styles, rules, requests, may come at any time from the nobles, ladies gallery, or whomever the tourney is being sponsored by.

3. When the tourney is ready to begin, the field heralds will draw your attention to each fighting field (often there is more than one), and will announce the pairings for that field. As the pairings are announced, find your opponent. It will be helpful later to know if/when your opponent is on the field should you accidentally not hear your name being called to the field.

4. After the pairings are read for each bout, the round is ready to begin. The first two fighters’ names will be called to “Take the field.” This means NOW. The next two names will be called to “Arm yourselves.” This means get armored up and ready, because you are taking the field immediately following those on the field. The third pair of names will be called to “Make yourselves ready.” This means that you should be getting suited up and be paying attention to the field because you are in the queue to take the field soon.

5. After each bout on the field, the pairings will move up in the order of “Take the field; Arm yourselves; Make ready”, until everyone who was paired up on that field has completed the round.

6. Once the round is concluded, the List mistress will process the results, generate the next pairings and the next round will be announced, starting again with the pairings of each field.

The importance of listening to the field heralds is that it will serve to keep the tourney running smoothly and swiftly. This is much appreciated by the List Mistress, the heralds, the marshals, the other fighters, and the spectators.

Also, if you have been eliminated from the tourney, don’t hesitate to volunteer to help the field heralds. There is never enough field heralds to work the field, and they are volunteering their services to make sure you have an enjoyable tournament. If you’re not fighting any more, consider giving them a hand in return.

Lastly, if your name is difficult to pronounce, be sure to give a phonetic spelling to the List Mistress, or Field Herald-in-Charge, so it can be pronounced correctly. Some names are difficult to pronounce and heralds will do their best to get it right. Please don’t take any insult if they mispronounce your Welsh name that has no vowels. Just kindly correct them for when they must call your name in the next round.

7. REFERENCES