

Heralds in History in the Middle Ages and Renaissance

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Class Outline and Handout for class originally presented in July 2002

Apology for Anglocentrism: Much of the information about the history of heralds which is available in English is about English Heraldry. I have tried as much as possible to discuss heralds from all over Europe.

It is also important to realize that the heralds in England, particularly in the later portion of this period, did have some peculiar institutions that did not exist, or only existed in limited form, elsewhere in Europe. These are identified whenever possible.

Outline/Class Notes

How do we know about Heraldry?

Period Literature

- **Earliest Literary Reference to a Herald: Le Chevalier de la Charette (Chrestien de Troyes) c. 1164-1174.** In this tale, Sir Lancelot is attending a joust in disguise. A herald of arms enters, wearing only a shirt because his coat and shoes are pledged at the tavern. He sees Lancelot's (sham) shield and is, clearly contrary to his expectations, unable to recognize it. [HH p.47]

Historians

Records, especially financial accounts

Origins of Heraldry

When? - appx. 12th c.

Where? - Where there were tournaments (all over Europe -- but at first, only places which had tournaments)

What? (the VERY basic job description)

- **People who**
 - **made proclamations**
 - **knew about arms (the insignia painted on fighters' shields)**
 - **were literate**
 - **(when working for a Lord) was considered his representative to some degree.**

- Expected to travel, either when working freelance (following the tournament circuit) or when following their Lord, all over Europe.

Who?

- Originally Tournament Officers
- Or minstrels
 - Ensuing rivalry with Minstrels
- Social status starts out low, in accordance with Medieval views of itinerants and entertainers, but does rise by the end of the Renaissance.

[Heraldic Organization Chart](#)

Who did they work for?

- Lords
- Tournament Societies
- Freelance

Organization

- **(the unofficial) "International Heraldic Confraternity" (Wagner's term)** - similar rules about conduct and expected fees/perks between France, England and (to a lesser extent) other parts of Europe. Some evidence exists of heralds in England claiming privileges due them because those privileges were had by French heralds [HE p72 et seq]. Much fraternization between heralds of different countries when on embassies or on war duty [HE p.43].
- **Working for Constables/Marshals when on some duties:** From some time before the 15th c on, this is the case in France and England for heralds, under the Constable's and Marshal's responsibility for "deeds of arms or war which are not part of common law" [HH p.21].
- **Colleges of Herald's:** A later development of the work under the Constables and Marshals. Not all Kingdoms had Colleges of Herald's: English College most elaborate.
- **Ranks**
 - Kings of Arms, Herald's, Pursuivants
 - officers Ordinary and Extraordinary
 - Associated Investiture ceremonies
- **Areas of Responsibility (Marches) within Kingdoms or Principalities**
 - under Kings of Arms
 - often based on tournament Marches
- **Uniforms or other Insignia of Office** - Expected to wear a Coat of Arms or other distinctive herald's uniform. Freelance herald insignia/uniform different than that of a herald working for a particular Lord. Less formal shield pendant also marks a herald as someone working for a particular Lord. Either the Coat of Arms or shield marks him as a representative of his master.

[The Changing Job Description \(overview\)](#)

Early (12th - 13th c.)

Proclaim in advance of, and at, tournaments.

- **Includes cheering.** And other positive comment during the tournament and possibly afterwards (composing songs etc). The fighters so cheered are expected to show largesse to their heraldic entourage. The cheering should be a legitimate opinion of the herald: an accusation that the fighter had paid the herald to cheer was an unpleasant one.
- **Unarmed and possibly Unarmored:** Heralds required to be unarmed (except perhaps for "pointless swords" [HH p.26]) and required to wear their coat of arms. There is an implication that they may have been required to be unarmored as well [HE p.3].
- **Risky Business:** In this period, the tournament was war training with the weapons of war, fought between two sides of 30 or 40 knights each. The introduction of plate armor after some time made these things a bit safer for the fighters and other people near the action (partially because fewer Knights could afford to participate) but one had to be careful [HE pps 2-3].

Literate

Recognize Arms

- **State of Armory in this period:** Recall that 'true heraldry' as defined as 'the systematic use of hereditary devices centered on the shield' originated about the 2nd quarter of the 12th c. Was well established by end of 12th c. in the upper classes [HH pps 12-14], and prevalent among Knights by 1250 [HE p.25]. The practice of 'unique' arms (similar arms should imply blood or feudal connections) is well established by 1250 as well based on rolls of arms [HH p.18].
- **Arms as Property:** Private agreements about rights to arms are found in 2nd half 13th c. in Germany, and are found elsewhere in Europe soon. Therefore arms can be considered property of the owner, who can then give rights to infringe upon those arms should he so desire [HH pps 19-20].
- **Compiling rolls of arms:** This was not a specific job duty of early heralds, but it was an action performed by the heralds, and compilations of heraldic records became part of some heraldic duties. The earliest such compilations are in the mid-13th c. [HH p.18]
 - 'occasional' rolls (based on some occasion: who was at this battle or tournament)
 - general rolls (compiled on a regional plan, often with attributed arms of legendary characters in the beginning).
- These rolls were considered important heraldic records and when they were copied by later heralds were copied as exactly as possible (old art style).
- "Roll of arms-like" constructions in other media: poems (Siege of Caerlaverock), architectural decoration.

Known by a Herald's Title: Only for non-freelance heralds, the earliest mention of such a title is Norroy in 1276 [WR p.153]. But such heraldic titles remain uncommon until some time in the mid 14th c [HE p.19]. Heraldic titles are equivalent to surnames and heralds may be addressed equally correctly by his family surname or his heraldic name. From the mid 14th c. heralds are often referred to by their titles as alternate names [HE p.19].

The formation of titles is different from place to place. In Scotland many of the titles derive from the name of Royal castles [BP p.94 et seq]. In England, most Heralds take the titles from the names of the original Lords. Most pursuivants take their title from Royal badges or badges of Royal orders (such as Bluemantle referring to the mantle of the Order of the Garter) [WR p.140] In 14th c. France, the early Kings of Arms take their titles from sovereign territories or Orders of Chivalry, with the Heralds' titles from provinces. The Pursuivant's titles were "epithets of gallantry or good encountering on joyful terms" such as Loyauté (Loyalty), Joli-Coeur (Merry Heart) and Dis-le-Vrai (Tell the Truth) [George p.19]. These last might be considered instances of motto titles (since such phrases could be mottoes) but the phrases were not, apparently, mottoes of the Lords for the heralds.

In general, we find these patterns of sources for heralds titles as well as heraldic charges or war cries/mottos. As an interesting note, a late 15th c. Burgundian herald states that the Duke gives to a new herald the name of the country from which came the wine with which he was baptized at his creation ceremony [HE p.87].

As a side point, but an important one: Lord Lyon King of Arms of Scotland is referred to as "Lord" because he is by modern job definition a Judge in the Court of Scotland and addressed as Lord. Heralds would not generally be addressed with "Lord" prefacing their titles.

General help to their Lord and knights in their company. "When the Chatelain of Coucy had spent a whole night in singing and diversion, his herald told him to go to bed for he would be calling him early in the morning. And when morning came, the heralds roused up the whole company of knights and told them it was time for church" [HH p.26]. This anecdote is from the end of the 13th or early 14th c. but the spirit thereof was found earlier in this period, including the part about waking people up before the battle, which is referenced by Guiart in 1304 describing the Battle of Bouvines in 1214. Remember, waking fighters up as ordered by the Lord is appropriate to the period. Presumably, given that this was an actual battle, they were thankful.

Servants in times of War: In this period this was limited to messenger service, and only found sporadically. As in the tournament, they are expected to be unarmed.

Middle (14th-15th c.)

Early expectations and duties continue but are expanded.

Continuing Tournament Work

- **More Ceremony:** King René's 15th c. Book of the Tournament shows heralds involved, not only in negotiating the tournament challenge (to set it up in the first place), and announcing the tournament, but in a review of the helmets for the Ladies after the tournament (so they could fink on any fighter who had not acted well, which fighter would then be barred from the evening's festivities). [Neubecker pps 16-17]
- **Tournament Societies:** Well established by this point. Each tournament district formed a tournament society, using a bird or beast as its emblem. Heralds were attached to tournament societies in some way as well as being attached to nobles. [Neubecker pps. 20-23]
- **Rules of Tournament:** In general the practices of tournament societies west of the Rhine were stricter than those east of the Rhine. The Western heralds' "marches" (areas of jurisdiction) derived from tournament areas of jurisdiction. [Neubecker p.20]

Servants in time of War:

- **Messengers (but not Spies!) - developed into Ambassadors** Not supposed to 'spy on' the message recipient [HH p.42], such discretion helped along by gifts from the receiver of the message [Neubecker p.14]. However, heralds were allowed to give 'useful advice' without going into specifics. Occasionally there are reports of heralds who let important information slip by accident, to the detriment of the herald's Lord. Over time the role becomes more of an ambassador than mere message carrier.
 - Quartered in their Prince's tents, for easy access. [Neubecker p.14]
 - French heralds who were carrying ultimatums or declarations of war delivered these with their faces covered with a veil of wool. This symbolized the fact that they really were unhappy to have to make such an announcement, and helped identify them as special (thus inviolate) people [George p.24].
- **Observers of the battle for their Lords.** This information was used not only on the spot, but eventually, by historians (who interviewed heralds). Some heralds wrote their own chronicles about their masters, or about the history they had seen [HE p.23].
- **After the battle:** The herald of the victor should raise his Lord's standard immediately, and then ensure that the banner of the loser was obtained. Herald's were to identify and count the dead (identification based on armory and on physical characteristics), arrange for burials, communicate with prisoners and handle ransom requests. Herald's, in principle, were not taken prisoner, although this was sometimes not observed. [Neubecker p.16-18]

'Master of Ceremonies' - officiating at feasts and other court festivities, and attending great occasions with their Masters in their Coats of Arms. An extension of the earlier 'general help in announcement and social coordination'. Involved in investitures of Peers, witnessing the dubbing of new knights before the beginning of battles (which of course were opened in a formal fashion, no guerilla warfare here). Expected to announce during the feast and cry largesse during the feast, and to attend the King on feast days, coming to and from the church with the King and attending the banquet.

- **Wouldn't be Caught Dead without a Bunch of Herald's:** Heraldic funerals a major prop and mainstay of herald for fees and other perquisites. Earliest heraldic funeral (known to Wagner) was in 1462 [HE p.107].

Arms Recognition

- **Arms as Property:** Most disputes in this period though are still private litigation, but Court of Chivalry (under the Constable and Marshal) hears cases from the first half of the 14th c. on [HH p.21]. Most famous English case of armorial dispute: Scrope vs. Grosvenor 1385, case lasted for five years in the Court of Chivalry. In this period, heralds are called as expert witnesses, or witnesses state that they have heard public proclamations from heralds, as part of testimony considering right of arms. From 15th c. on in England heralds have official standing in the Court (are paid by the court) [HH p.24].
- **Right to Arms Question and Right to Grant Arms:** in England (not on the Continent!) Kings of Arms get to grant arms. In 1417, there is a Royal Enactment which gives Kings of Arms the perquisite of granting arms, implying that perhaps some lesser ranked heralds did so earlier. Arms are only to be granted to persons who are neither 'vile' nor 'dishonest' [HH p.61]

Meanwhile, on the continent, arms were extended to all social classes (not just fighting) c. 1230-1330 based on seals, even including peasant and Jews [Traité p.47]. Burgher (middle-class townspersons) arms in Germany and the Low Countries became a very consistent system although with some distinctions (such as helm types) from noble arms [WR p.21].

- **Arms = Nobility?** This issue starts to arise in mid 14th c., soon after "arms = property". The whole issue of the right to grant arms brings up the question of arms and nobility. If Arms = Nobility and Heralds can grant Arms then that implies a herald may be "creating" (rather than "recognizing") nobility. This becomes a particular issue in England, where most grants of arms are from heralds rather than from the English crown. On the Continent however grants directly from Kings of Arms are unknown so this issue is much less of a problem, although questions arise occasionally.

All over Europe however arms become strongly associated with nobility. People in tournaments are required to be noble or gentlemen 'on 4 sides' in 15th c. France for the main level of tournaments (a lesser level exists in which this is not a requirement) [HH p.71]. You could be noble *without* arms, but arms became expected of such individuals. "I can't tourney with him, he has no arms, therefore he is not noble" was one late 14th c. French Knight's assumption about an English man at arms. On hearing this complaint, Richard II (on the spot) acknowledged the English man at arms as a gentleman and said that he would be henceforth known by Arms (and he was then allowed to participate in the tournament) [Dennys p.152]. So one could certainly be a noble without arms (as was this man at arms)-- but the two are strongly associated.

Henry V in 1417 spoke against the assumption of arms and "tunics of arms called Cotearmures" by those whose ancestors had not so borne in times past: no one was to do this without having ancestral right, or a grant by someone with authority, except all those who fought in Agincourt [HE p.36].

Administrivia: in England, with the enactments of 1417, we get more formal organization of heralds involved in the matter of granting arms and heraldic organization. Kings of Arms are to hold 'chapters' to resolve doubts of Heralds or Pursuivants, or kick problems up to the Constable for resolution [HH p.61].

- **Roster for Service:** From the end of the 15th c. on the heralds of the English Crown had a known rotation of service. Aside from substitutions for sickness or special business, a King of Arms, Herald and Pursuivant would always be together in attendance on the King for each principal feast, great council or other times the King needed heralds in attendance. Note that this distributes the fees around [HE p.97].
- **Introduction of Garter in England:** Garter King of Arms is put over the English territorial Kings of Arms in 1415 causing disputes about 'which King of Arms gets to grant arms here anyways' which last through to 1530 [HH p.81]. Remember, granting arms = fee.
- **Visitation-like things:** An early 15th c. tract by Toison d'Or King of Arms give the herald's oath of Montjoye King of Arms, with explicit requirement that every 3 years each march should have the names, arms, crests and "cris de guerre" of the tenants noted. There are similar requirements for French Marshals of Arms in the 15th c. [HE p.34] It is believed the English heralds had similar activities which led to the 16th c. Visitations.

- **Colleges of Heralds:** English College is incorporated by Richard III in 1484, although this is one of Richard's acts that was later undone by his successors. The College was under the Earl Marshal with Garter acting as the effective day to day head.

In France, the heralds incorporate Le College des Hérauts de France, and acquire the Chapel of Petit Saint Antoine for housing their library and their meetings in 1406/1407. The articles of incorporation of their College confirm the traditional privileges of the heralds [HH p.96, George p.20].

General Social Standing of Heralds: Raised somewhat over the early days but the "vagabond associations" stay with them. In the 1st half of the 15th c. Heralds continue to be classed in a homilectic work with crafts such as "harlots, jugglers, sham cripples, beggars, public buffoons, professional champions, false toll collectors and executioners." [HE p.19] Ongoing Minstrel vs. Herald friction seen in the works by the minstrels about the heralds, which former see the latter as pompous, expensive and arguably useless. In the late 14th c. poem "Dit des Hyraus" the poet explains that (in addition to other problems with the expense of tournaments) "every knight has to maintain three or four heralds and cannot get rid of them... So, one must be enterprising and it is [the author's] wish to become a herald; for there is no profession more convenient for an idle, greedy man, nor any in which one may talk so much and do so little." [HH p.30] Still, the heralds in 15th c. London lived in a fashion as did the members of the Guilds, and socialized with them, a fairly high social class for a non-noble [HE p.126].

Late (16th c.)

The trend of heraldry continues towards a slightly more 'bourgeois' scale

- heralds now are no longer expected to be much like minstrels,
- heralds on embassy are generally ambassadors not message carriers
- The recognition of arms/armorial recordkeeping parts are expanded.
- All previous categories of work continue.

Ceremonial: Heralds continue to attend major ceremonies, and to make proclamations. For example at the baptism of the infant son of James VI in 1594, the baby was preceded from his bedroom to the christening chapel by Lyon and the heralds who proclaimed his style and titles after the christening [BP p.102].

Heraldic Funerals: Particularly big in 16th c, with huge expense for the family. The family of the Duke of Rothes (in 1631, so shortly after period) was almost bankrupted by the expense of his funeral [BP p.101]. At the funeral of Henri IV in 1610 there were 22 Kings of Arms and 55 heralds in the procession [George p.23].

Administrivia

- in 1530, the big argument between Garter and the provincial Kings of Arms is settled and the provincial Kings are given sole right to grant arms, with associated fees etc [HH p.99].
- **Visitations:** official visitation as per English, is peculiar to England. The official start of such things was 1530 although there are implications of similar activities earlier, for example, the 1530 writ is specifically written to require the assistance of local authorities rather than making the whole process sound new. The 1530 writ required [HH p.7]:
 - A Visitation write issued under Royal letters patent

- Conducted by a King of Arms
- Could correct (e.g. fix, deface or remove) any depictions of arms unlawfully borne
- Enter those lawfully borne arms into records along with the pedigree of the bearer
- Authorities directed to provide all assistance to the heralds

NOT Genealogists: The Visitations are the introduction of genealogy into the herald's job description. Even so, a herald's involvement was to assess whether a provided genealogy was likely to be correct. It was not to perform the genealogical work. There is some small evidence that some heralds may have done some genealogical research, but it was not part of their job description [Dennys p.160, HE p.132]

Other areas' Visitation-like Activities: Ulster Herald in Ireland has some attempts at visitations at this time as well [HH p.6]. In Scotland a 'visitation' involved only survey and registration of arms (no genealogy), but the earliest actual legislation which gives Lyon a requirement to inspect arms of noblemen in a visitation like fashion is in 1592 [WR p.154].

Colleges of Arms: The English College of Arms is re-granted a charter in 1555, which gives them a building in which to conduct their business and the normal powers of a corporate body. It is not explicitly stated to be under the Earl Marshal as previously, but eventually after period (in 1673) it is clearly brought firmly back under the Earl Marshal. It seems clear that the heralds continued to act as a body to some degree between the period of the first incorporation and this second incorporation. [Dennys p.144-145]

The Heralds in Ordinary are set forth in the 1555 charter [Dennys p.144]. The previous 'chapter' meetings continued, and after the 1555 charter the Officers of Arms in the chapter meetings also handled corporate business. The College building becomes an office of record due to the storage of important records, although the library is at times neglected. The Earl Marshal rules in 1568 that the heralds' records should be kept in the library and none should enter the library without being accompanied by a herald [WR p.145]. Replacement of English officers of arms becomes chapter business in this century: the Officers of Arms agree to decide on replacements for deceased officers and then present their choice as a body [Dennys p.148].

The Elizabethan period is particularly difficult, at least in part due to the awful, violent and incompatible personalities of William Dethick (in College from 1540 on, Garter from 1550-1584) and Ralph Brooke (in College from 1580-1625, ending as York Herald) [HE, chapter on the Elizabethan period].

In the French College, Mountjoy becomes the Principal King of Arms in 1515, previously other Kings of Arms had rotated through the top precedence spot. In 1578, with the introduction of the Order of the Holy Spirit, the French add an officer "The King of Arms of the Orders of the King", who is given the duty of keeping a list of the arms, crests and supporters of all persons received into their orders, as well as being a general secretary of the orders. [George pps. 20-22]

General Social Standing: Continues to improve in respect to the herald being of a higher social class than the previous minstrel/itinerant class. Balfour Paul says that the heralds in Scotland were often of the lesser Lairds and their kindred [BP p.96], and while his assessment is undated it seems very much to be true in the 16th c. This drawing of heralds from the lesser gentlefolk seems to be a general trend at this time.

However, at the same time their status lessens over this century, with accusations of living immoral lives and selling arms for money (the standard accusation to levy at a herald one does not like), or otherwise mis-granting arms to individuals who should be ineligible. In France, the prestige of the heralds had

been declining for some time, and got sharply worse after the death of Henri II in 1559, with accusations of these sorts of misconduct. [George p.26]

Large amounts of internal squabbling in the English College in this century, described in gory detail in *Heralds of England*. The bad blood spills over to heralds testifying against other heralds in criminal actions, more accusations of sale of arms for money, heralds tricking other heralds into granting arms to persons of vile status and then complaining about the grants, and other lovely shows of cooperative spirit.

Perquisites and Fees:

Inviolable: Certainly the case by the end of the Renaissance. In 1524, a whole town in Provence was razed because a herald of Charles V was killed [Neubecker p.19]. In 1514, Lord Drummond (the grandfather of the earl of Angus) was imprisoned and his estates forfeited, for boxing Lyon on the ear while Lyon was delivering a message -- although the severity of the punishment may have been part of other political machinations [BP p.82]. The inviolable nature of a herald stems from the fact that he is the representative of his Lord, so an assault on the herald is like an assault on the Lord -- treason, in the case of a King.

Tax Free: The heralds generally considered themselves to be "exempt from payment of all taxes, subsidies and relief, exempt from tolls and customs, freedom from jury service or being required to serve in public office". This was declared by Edward VI in 1549, but the declaration was reaffirming traditional heralds' rights (after a change in law required them to be subject to one such tax, and they complained) rather than being a new declaration. Many of these tax exemptions were standard rights of French nobility (not England), and the French heralds generally had those prerogatives of a noble, but the English heralds needed this stated explicitly [HE p.101]. Still, the French Kings of Arms once had to ask the King to keep people from representing themselves as heralds to evade taxes [Neubecker p.19]

Footloose and Fancy-Free: Herald's were free to travel where they wished, not a usual lifestyle in the Middle Ages or Renaissance. "Free to travel" includes, as stated above, exemption from tolls and customs.

We Have to Keep Telling You 'cause you Won't Write it Down: Most herald's fees were customary rather than legislated -- and many of them came on infrequent occasions such as marriages, funerals and coronations. Therefore, the heralds spend much time to keep records of said fees and remind people of said records if the required fees are not forthcoming. By understanding the fees, we understand why certain parts of the profession flourished and others didn't, and some of the internal squabbles and organization.

Stuff, not Cash: Many of the heralds' fees were actually in the form of tangible objects rather than money, or tangible objects that might be redeemed by their owner for a known standard fee.

Tournament Perks: One of the major tournament perks of the herald is the broken armor left on the field (recalling that the tournaments were like war melees, that's a lot of broken bits). By the beginning of the 15th c. the Herald's were also entitled to broken armor of combatants in a Court of Chivalry combat (it had previously gone to the constable). Depending on the sort of lists, the heralds might also have right to horse trappers and broken lances, and sometimes even horses (of the overthrown party) [HE pps 103-106].

No Extra Pay for Routine Work: There were rarely particular fees for proclamations and tournament work, especially in the early days of heraldry. Certain proclamations of importance were sometimes paid for, especially those marking special occasions [HE p.76].

Messenger Tips: The occasional fee was paid by the receiver of the message in wartime. This was more of a tip, and an encouragement to the herald not to disclose what he had seen in the camp of the enemy, than a set customary fee [Neubecker p.14].

Ceremonial Attendance and Minstrelsy: Heralds generally paid for attendance at grand functions (such as marriages) and general minstrelsy in England at least by the late 13th c. Records show French heralds being likewise paid at the beginning of the 14th c. Sometimes this was like largesse, sometimes payment for a particularly clever or enjoyable act by a herald, and sometimes just payment for doing something. [HE p.17]

Sometimes the party paying was the Lord of the heralds (for having the heralds come along) but sometimes it was the host: for example the host of a Marriage might pay the heralds of the visiting Lords as well as their own heralds [HH p.27].

Customary fees and largesse at Coronation and at the baptism of a prince and princess, "Giving the King a New Year", and other occasions too numerous to enumerate here [HE is a great source for this, many many pps.].

Funerals, as mentioned above, were a big source of fees for heralds once heraldic funerals became popular.

Division of fees of heralds attending the Crown: "The sums were paid to the office and shared out in the usual proportion to the heralds in attendance: a King of arms' share is double a Herald's, and a Herald double a Pursuivant, but something was set aside for ordinary officers who did not attend and for extraordinary officers who did." The division of fees, unsurprisingly, is subject to change and discussion/squabbling over time, but the average practices, when they were set forth clearly, follow this guideline [HE p.94-95].

Clothes make the Man: Money for summer and winter robes for Kings of Heralds, or Crown heralds in general are found in various records as early as 1290. Sometimes this was a generic gift ("robes proper to his station"), sometimes a gift of particular sort of cloth. Kings of Arms' patents from 15th c. on refer to a grant of livery or clothing annually, although clothing issues from the Crown rare after middle of 16th c [HE pps 77-78].

Heralds were exempted from sumptuary laws from the reign of Edward III to Henry VIII [HE p.102-103]

Ennoblement Fees: People being ennobled (either newly ennobled, or acceding to greater estate) are expected to pay any Officers of Arms present at the ennoblement [HH p.72]. This may be a gift or a fixed price at various times and places [HE p.74-75]. Heralds present as witnesses at the dubbing of a new Knight were also to be paid [Neubecker p.15]

Shirt off your Back: In England, Garter had a special perk traced to the early 15th c. and William Bruges' petition: to get the clothing in which a prince, duke, marquess or earl was created -- this right was said to be one already had by Montjoye King of Arms in France so the right was perhaps an international one. This right was extended to Viscounts and Barons in 1522 by Henry VIII. As an example, in 1513/14 Garter claimed a gown worth 200 pounds from Charles Brandon (newly made) Duke of Suffolk, in violet furred with sable and decorated with scrolls of fine gold with Charles' motto. Garter wore the garment the whole next day but the Duke redeemed it for a gown of black velvet furred with martin, a sum of 10 pounds, and a 4 pound annuity for life. This was serious money at that time. Garter had similar rights at the installation of Knights of the Garter. [HE p.75]

Some of the Knights of lesser estate being dubbed were also expected to give their pre-dubbing garments to the heralds, although there was a set price by which the garment could be redeemed. [Neubecker p.15]

Cups: A Herald, Pursuivant or King of Arms generally got a cup at his investiture, of silver or silver-gilt, which was considered part of his fee (see investitures, below). [HE p.84]

"Diet" and general household expenses: The Crown's heralds are entitled to eat in the feast hall and in other days: ranks determine how good the situation is. (Garter gets his own table, the general Officers of Arms share their own table, the Pursuivants sit at the head of the varlet's table). In most of this period the Crown Heralds were expected to attend the King at court and have expenses approved for their food at that time. By the end of the 16th c. this was no longer approved, presumably, because the heralds were not so much about as they had been. Still Henry VIII ordered that each King of Arms must keep 3 servants and 3 horses at Court, the six Heralds one servant and two horses, and each of the 7 pursuivants one horse... all at Crown expense. [HE p.97-98]

Patents of Arms: For English Kings of Arms, who granted arms, there was a fee to the herald. This wasn't fixed for most of this period but became fixed in the 2nd quarter of the 16th c. [HE p. 107]

Salary: By the end of this period there's a bit of one for important members of the English College of Arms, above and beyond clothing allotments. [HE p.99-100]

[More about Herald Ranks, Uniforms, Ceremonies associated with Ranks...](#)

Heraldic Ranks:

- Kings of Heralds first mentioned in 1276 in England with an associated territory north of the Trent (what is later Norroy) [HE p.6]. Much earlier in France, where Kings of Arms are mentioned in 1137 and 1180 [George p.19]. This term is roughly contemporary with use of "Kings of Minstrels" and this may tie into the fool Kings of the festivals (May King, Lord of Misrule etc.) Kings of Heralds almost exclusively in employ of sovereign princes, although there is an early example of March King of Arms being possibly attached to Henry Lord Percy c. 1298 before becoming a Royal herald. [HE pps7-8]

Kings of Arms not only had higher status than Heralds and Pursuivants but had territorial jurisdiction. This conferred some sort of responsibility over the lesser heralds in the territory/march, but also came with large share of fees and perks. In England, until the creation of Garter, no King of Arms was without his march. [HH p.39]

Each King of Arms needed to deputize a herald called Marshal of Arms of the March (this is clearly stated by most of the English authors on the subject) [HH 43 et seq]. I'm still not quite clear on the division of responsibility between the King of Arms and the Marshal of Arms, perhaps this latter may be responsible for handling generic heraldic matters in the march if the King of Arms is attending his Lord or on embassy.

It isn't clear to me if this is the same as the French Marshal of Arms but if so it's a very different duty than what I posit above. However, the French rank doesn't sound like an automatic deputy to a King of Arms, so perhaps it is a different thing indeed. In 1487 King Charles VIII created Gilbert Chaveau, Bourbon Herald 'Marshal of Arms of the French' - a rank lying between that of a King of Arms and a Herald, charging him 'to take and receive in a catalogue all blazons of all nobles of the Kingdom, of the Dauphine/ and other parts and to correct faults, if faults there

should be found.' Jean le Fevre, first Toison d'Or King of Arms, was Charolais Marshal of arms before his promotion. [George p.23]

- In Normandy, there is a mention of a Duke of Heralds in 1347 and in 1480: this seems to be peculiar to Normandy and ranks, as one might expect, between a Herald and a King of Arms. (A Duke of arms is NOT, like Da'ud ibn Auda, someone who was a King of Arms twice :-) [George p.23]
- Heralds: The generic term through this period but (those fees again) the status of a Herald, as opposed to Pursuivant or King of Arms, is an important one. Heralds could be retained by 'mere' Lords and Knights. [HE p.7]
- Pursuivants: Junior or probationary heralds, found later than the other terms. One 15th c. writer claims this state is like a novice in religion, so a Pursuivant could renounce the duties of his office if needs be. By the 15th c. Pursuivants would not be appointed without the recommendation of two heralds who could attest to their discretion virtue and honesty. They needed to be "over 20, well educated and of good standing." They had to serve an apprenticeship of some years before promotion to herald, as much as 7 years (in the Burgundian court). [HE p.22]

In France, the Pursuivants were almost always given the riskiest announcements: summoning towns to surrender to the King's Writ or summoning rebellious nobles to court. "Louis XI was rather fond of promoting Pursuivants to the rank of Herald for particular services, on the basis that it gave them much pleasure without costing him a penny" [George p.24]. (It also, presumably, gave them rights to a bigger slice of the fee division amongst their heraldic brethren.)

Heralds' Uniform/Regalia: Note that the best single readily available source for information about Herald's regalia is Neubecker (see Bibliography).

- **Tabards:** The herald's "coat of arms", probably originally a cast off fighting surcoat of the Heralds' Lord, became standardized as a tabard with the Lord's arms on back, front, and each sleeve. References to the herald's distinctive wear are found in the 13th c. [HE p.78]

Note that in some occasions, a herald might wear the coat of arms of someone other than his master. In 1380 when the English were before Troyes, Chandos and Aquitaine heralds were sent to offer battle wearing coats of arms of the Duke of Buckingham rather than their usual tabards. In 1463, some English Crown heralds attending the funeral of the Earl of Salisbury wore coats of the deceased Earl's arms, rather than the King's. [HE p.84]

In some places and times (particularly England and France), Pursuivants were supposed to wear their tabards "athwart" with the sleeves forward and back (giving a 'very large sleeve' effect). References can be found as early as 1435-40, and in 1576 Rouge Croix Pursuivant was fined for presuming to wear his coat as a herald. [HE p.79]

Tabards ranged from being very expensive to much less so, at least from 15th c. records. For example, when Henry VI had to unexpectedly take the field he bought Lancaster King of Arms' tabard for 20 pounds. But contemporary tabards could be found for down to one pound. As an example the Earl of Warwick in 1437 paid 10 pounds 10 s. for his coat of arms but 1 pound for that of his heralds. [HE p.80]

In 16th c. England customs arose for different materials for tabards for different ranks of herald but even during the 16th c. the customs changed. [HE p.80]

“Freelance” heralds (who were not associated with a Lord) wore tabards or capelets decorated with small plain or ‘generic’ shields rather than with a large coat of arms. (Neubecker specifically says “plain” shields, but the illustrations show either plain shields or shields with simple armory). [Neubecker p.18]

- **Escutcheons:** Officers of Arms are given a small escutcheon of the master’s arms to wear, on informal occasions or while travelling. It is like a sort of a jewel (metal engraved or enameled.) It is generally worn on the shoulder or on the breast, and period documents differ about where exactly the shield should be worn, English favoring the left breast but Sicily herald supporting the right. Note that similar shields were sometimes given by a Lord to a herald of some other Lord, as a mark of esteem. We can find examples from the 14th and 15th c. of heralds wearing such shields of their own and other lords, or Lords giving out such escutcheons. Henry VI gave 40 s to a herald of the King of Aragon, so that the herald might commission such a shield of Henry’s arms to be made. [HE p.86-87]
- **Crowns:** For Kings of Arms, only. To the beginning of the 17th c. they were found in many forms with points ending in fleurs, trefoils, balls, or plain points. The present English form with the oak leaves was standardized ca. George II. English Kings of Arms crowns were copper gilt or silver gilt, until Garter came back from Scotland in 1636 saying complaining that Lyon's crown was gold, and Garter was granted that right thereafter [HE p.90-91] French Kings of Arms wore their crowns on ceremonial occasions until as late as 1555, using a raised potency motif. [George p.36]
- **Rods or Sceptres:** Many pictures of heralds show them in conjunction with rods, specifically (in England) white Rods, but exactly who has the right to bear this rod is not clear, or how exactly it is used. At one point William Bruges asked to be given the right to bear a long white rod with a little banner of the arms of St. George at the end, which right to be exclusively his (as Garter) – but it isn’t clear whether the exclusive right was to be the rod, or the rod with the flag. [HE p.92]
- **Mantles:** Garter, as herald for the Order of the Garter, has a mantle as officer of the Order. [HE p.93]

Heralds “created”: As early as 1180 (reference to ‘singer newly made herald’ of William the Marshal) there is an implication that some form of admission or creation applies to heralds [HE p.4]. Creation ceremonies soon came to be associated with this, although Creations could be done on an impromptu basis, such as a Royal response to a particular service or welcome piece of news [Neubecker p.18 etc.].

- **Herald Creation Ceremonies:** Found from 14th c. on, and could only be performed by a sovereign or his deputy [HH p.31]. The creation ceremonies are more elaborate for higher ranks, and become more elaborate over time. Creation of the Pursuivants found later than for the other ranks. As a general rule, if there is some piece of regalia that goes with the office that would not have already been borne by that herald, the regalia will be used in the ceremony somehow. For example, illustrations of the investiture of Garter show heralds in attendance holding the robe due him as an Officer of the Order of the Garter. The small escutcheon worn by various ranks of officers of arms is also given at the creation of that officer.

Most herald creation ceremonies have oaths, with the higher ranks building on the lower ranks.

- **Pursuivant Creation Ceremonies:** Originally without an oath. By 1400 Anjou herald complains about the newfangled custom of baptising pursuivants with a cup filled with water [HH p.43]. Other discussions of Pursuivant creation say watered wine is used [HE p.84].

Once a Pursuivant starts having an oath in the ceremony, it goes more or less as follows: "He must swear to be lowly and humble and serviceable to all estates universal that were Christian, not lying in wait to hurt nor blame any of them in anything that might touch their honor, to dispose himself to be secret and sober, not too busy in speech, ready to commend and loath to blame, and diligent in his service, eschewing vices and drawing towards virtues." [HE pps.43-44]

Pursuivants wore coats of arms, and in those times and places where a Pursuivant wore his tabard athwart, the investiture ceremony would put the tabard on in this fashion, as with the investiture of Portcullis Pursuivant in 1588 "with the Manches before and behinde". [HE p.79]

- **Herald Creation Ceremonies:** Include an oath, and vesting with a coat of arms. They are baptised with wine from a cup which he may keep. In areas where a Pursuivant wore his tabard athwart, the ceremony might well include turning the tabard to the more usual direction.

In England, once the Collar of SS is found as officer regalia, the Herald may be invested with this collar during the ceremony (it is not clear whether this was appropriate for heralds or just for Kings of Arms early, but by the 16th c. it is a standard part of a herald's investiture). This collar may be considered part of Royal Livery rather than part of the herald's uniform: it is not clear. [HE pps. 89-90]

A herald swears the same oath as a Pursuivant (during the period when Pursuivants did not swear, the contents of the Pursuivant's oath were presumably part of the herald's oath.) The herald's oath has the following additions over the Pursuivant's: "to be true to his Lord and to report any treason he might hear spoken against him: to be serviceable and obedient to all lords and ladies, gentlemen and gentlewomen, and to keep their secrets except for treason, while seeking and reporting worshipful deeds: if he chanced to meet any gentleman of name and arms, who had lost his goods in the Kings service, to give or lend to him, if he heard any strife between gentlemen, not to report it: to be serviceable and true to all widows and maidens and, if any man would wrong them, to bear witness on their behalf to his Lord: and to forsake all vices and take to him all virtues, avoiding taverns, dice and playing at hazard, places of debate and the company of dishonest women." [HE p.43-44]

Note that the Continental heralds' oaths include clauses having to do with the professional interest of the heraldic body. The English heralds' oaths omit these clauses. These clauses require the herald to "preserve and increase to the best of his ability the rights, privileges and franchises of the office of arms; to make known to his fellows any deeds of arms, feasts, tournaments, jousts and other assemblies of arms and honour, at which they may be able to acquire thanks, honour, and profit; and not to keep such things to himself for his private advantage or from malevolence." [HE p.44]

- **Kings of Arms Creation Ceremonies:** Include an oath and vesting with a coat of arms. They are baptised with wine from a cup which he may keep. As noted with the Heralds, once the Collar of SS is found as officer regalia, it is expected of Heralds – and Kings of Arms (the first known example is from William Bruges, who was the first Garter King of Arms). [HE p.36-37]

Lyon King of Arms was crowned with a crown that was much like the Royal Crown (without jewels). It is unclear how early this custom was, David Lindsay of the Mount II (created Lyon 1592) stated that the King Himself put the ancient open crown of the sovereigns of Scotland on his head, and he wore that crown at dinner with the King... the copies of the crown without gems are definitely in place after the Renaissance. [BP p.85, 91] English Kings of Arms developed their special crowns [Dennys p.150].

A King of Arms swears a Herald's oath with the following addition of a clause where he must "promise to render a fair accounting and division of all largesse received on behalf of his bretheren." [HH p.43]

- **Those Cups:** The cup for the creation of a King of Arms, Herald or Pursuivant might be of silver or silver gilt depending on the time and place. There are various written guidelines but the records from the Master of the Jewel House do not show a consistent application of any of these guidelines. Unsurprisingly any written records call for more elaborate or more expensive cups for higher heraldic ranks. [HE p.85]

Some interesting heraldic personality trivia

Sir David Lindsay of the Mount: Lyon King of Arms (the first of two Lyons of that name). He was the effective Scottish National poet until Burns' time, and a political and religious thinker and reformer. He was a courtier to James V for his whole life (including his childhood). A thorough history of his life and his place in Scottish history is *Court and Culture in Renaissance Scotland*, Carol Edington, University of Massachusetts Press, Amherst 1994. His poetry is available in collections of Scottish poetry of the 16th c. I have just recently found out he is also the co-hero of a Nigel Tranter 'fictionalized history' about the life of James V (but seen from the viewpoint of David Beaton and David Lindsay of the Mount): *The Riven Realm/James, by the Grace of God/ Rough Wooing*. I know one graduate student in Scots history who is afraid to read Tranter because Tranter's history is good enough that it might make her confuse fact and fiction. Having read through these novels once, they're not a bad read (although the plot might have been a bit tighter were it completely fictional), the heraldry is good, but there isn't much of an insight into the day to day herald's life provided therein.

Thomas Bariye: Unicorn Pursuivant (in Scotland) in 1570, he was caught forging the Regent's signature, for which he had his right hand cut off and was banished from the Kingdom. [BP p.95]

Sir William Stewart: Lyon King of Arms in 1567, only held office for 6 months after which he was arrested under charges of conspiring to kill the Regent via sorcery and necromancy, and for which he was put to death in August 1569. It is generally believed that the real problem was opposition to the Regent and loyalty to the Queen. [BP p.84]

Ralph Brooke (various offices held in English College 1580-1625): Possibly most disagreeable herald who ever lived. See Wagner's *Heralds of England* for a blow-by-blow description. In many cases, "blow by blow" is quite literal.

Bibliography for this class (Annotated)

Some of this material is footnoted/referenced in the outline above: those abbreviations are given below in [Square Brackets]

[BP] Sir James Balfour Paul, *Heraldry in relation to Scottish History and Art*, Edinburgh, David Douglas, 1900. Chapter 3 is on the Heraldic Executive in Scotland and is a very thorough overview of the topic, including the origins of the Scottish herald's titles.

Charles Burnett, *Contacts between Scottish and English Officers*, Tribute to an Armorer, John Campbell-Kease (editor), The Heraldry Society, 2000 ed. John Campbell-Kease. Gives a good history of the title subject. The author was at the time of the writing Ross Herald in Scotland.

[Dennys] Rodney Dennys, *Heraldry and the Heralds*, Jonathan Cape, London, 1982. A well-written book covering aspects of armory and of heralds from its origins to the present day, with an English focus. Dennys was a member of the English College of Arms.

[George] John George, *The French Heralds*, The Double Tressure No. 8 1986 pps. 19-39. A good discussion of this topic, in English, including much information not in the other sources. The author was, at the time of the writing, Kintyre Pursuivant in Scotland.

[Neubecker] Ottfried Neubecker, *Heraldry, Sources Symbols and Meanings*, Black Cat, 1976. One of the single most useful overviews of all things heraldic, containing many color pictures of period artifacts. The author is not English, and provides a useful foreign perspective. Many good pictures of regalia, either actual extant regalia or pictures of manuscripts showing heralds.

Michel Pastoureau, *Heraldry (an introduction to a noble tradition)*, English translation copyright 1997, Thames and Hudson. Another nice overview of all things heraldic, unfortunately without much that immediately pertains to the topic of this class. Some information about the classes of people who bore arms is provided in this book.

[Traité] Michel Pastoureau, *Traité d'Héraldique*, 2nd ed. Grands Manuels Picard, 1993. An excellent book on Medieval armory and related topics, although unfortunately for most readers, in French. It has occasional information bearing on the topic of this class, particularly concerning the classes of people who bore arms. Most of the book is on the history of armory.

G.D. Squibb, *Munimenta Heraldica*, Publications of the Harleian Society New Series Vol 4, 1985. This book is an anthology of 500 years (1484-1984) of documents pertaining to the English College of Arms, the Earl Marshal, and the Officers of Arms, with translations and originals of Latin texts.

[HE] Anthony Richard Wagner, *Heralds of England*, Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1967. All about the Heralds of England up until the 20th c. Full of entertaining trivia, and an enjoyable "read" (even though the book itself is large and unwieldy, don't let that scare you. It has large type and large margins.) Much of the material for this period is also covered in Wagner's book *Heralds and Heraldry in the Middle Ages* (q.v.) However, this book contains an additional wealth of detailed information about English herald's fees, herald's titles, personalities of individuals, College of Arms politics, and so forth. Wagner was a member of the English College for years.

[HH] Anthony Richard Wagner, *Heralds and Heraldry in the Middle Ages*, 2nd ed., Oxford University Press, 1956. An excellent book with much information on this topic, and a strong focus on the history of Visitations and historical evidence showing that the Visitations were merely an outgrowth of earlier heraldic activities along these lines. Much of this information is also available in *Heralds in England*, which is written more entertainingly. Advantages to this book: compact size and complete focus on the Middle Ages, focus on heralds all through Europe (although with a main interest in England), as opposed to *Heralds in England* which is almost exclusively about English practices.

[WR] Thomas Woodcock and John Martin Robinson, *The Oxford Guide to Heraldry*, Oxford University Press, 1990. A good modern guide to heraldry in England from its origins to the present day, well written and with good illustrations. While this does not have much material on the topic of this class, it does have some information, and is more up to date in its scholarship than the Wagner works in some cases. While Wagner's scholarship is impeccable some new documents etc. have come to light since the books mentioned above were written, and some of that information is in this book. Thomas Woodcock is a member of the English College.

Journals

Coat of Arms (Heraldry Society [of England]), *The Double Tressure* (Heraldry Society [of Scotland]), various proceedings of societies of antiquaries occasionally turn up articles on this topic. None of these were used as specific sources of the information in this class except as noted above. David Hunter of Montlaw has provided the following list of articles which apply to topics in this class:

Frere, J, "The Herald's Duties on the Death of the King" *Coat of Arms*, Old Series vol. 2, p. 43

Maclagan, M., "Activities and Rewards of the Officers of Arms in the Mid-Nineteenth Century" *Coat of Arms*, Old Series, vol. 6, p. 146

Rangel, M, "The Heraldic Executive in Spain" *Coat of Arms*, Old Series, vol. 7, p. 145

Davies, T. R., "Heraldry in Medieval Warfare," *Coat of Arms*, Old Series, vol. 9, p. 68

Davies, T. R., "Heralds in Medieval Warfare," *Coat of Arms*, Old Series, vol. 9, p. 245

Squibb, G.D. "Heralds and Pursuivants Extraordinary" *Coat of Arms*, Old Series, vol. 9, pp. 238, 274

Whitney, J.R.S. "Two 15th Century Chester Heralds" *Coat of Arms*, Old Series, vol. 12, pp. 52, 124, 160.

Agnew of Lochnaw, yr, "The Mount- Lord Lyon" *Coat of Arms*, New Series, vol. 2, p. 87

Enright, M., "A Note on the Inauguration of the Lyon King of Arms" *Coat of Arms*, New Series, vol. 2, p. 7

Lester, G. A., "The Fifteenth Century English Heralds and their Fees: A Case for Forgery" *Coat of Arms*, new Series, vol. 7, p. 32

"Lancaster & Annesley: A Record of Arms used in a 14th C. Single Combat in Soc. Of Antiquaries MS 305," *Coat of Arms*, no. 174, p. 261

"Creation of the Office of Garter King of Arms" *Coat of Arms*, no. 172, p. 134

"Sir James Balfour of Denmylne and Kinnaird and his Coronation as Lyon King of Arms of Scotland, 1630" *Coat of Arms*, no. 179, p. 117.

George, J. "The French Heralds," *Double Tressure*, no. 8, pp. 19-39

Heralds in History: Illustrations

(due to copyright restrictions the actual photographs cannot be uploaded, but here are the descriptions)

1. From King René's book of the Tournament (15th c.) The herald for the Duke of Brittany presents, to the Duke of Bourbon, a roll of arms for possible umpires for the tournament, of which the Duke of Bourbon may choose four (Neubecker p.14).
2. From the same book, a pursuivant of the Duke of Brittany (bottom left), wearing his tabard athwart, proclaims the start of the tournament. The umpires are wearing armorial 'badges' fastened to their headgear. (Neubecker p.14)
3. (Left) "Sicily" Herald, Jean Courteois c. 1420, "responsible for the most authoritative written record of the rights and duties of a herald" (used frequently as a source in this class.) Next to him, the pursuivant of the elector Frederick II of Brandenburg, named Hans, titled "Burggraf". The arms to the right are his personal arms. Note that German pursuivants did not wear their tabards

athwart. These two tabards show that the garment may be of varying length. Note the spiffy fringe on Hans' tabard. (Neubecker p.19).

4. Herald of Nassau-Vianden (note the lack of sleeves), the herald Jörg Rugenn (from Bavaria) (wearing a tabard with more drape than is customary), and the herald Anton Tirol, 1510. Anton is wearing a freelance herald's "tabard" (from Neubecker's description) although it appears to be cut like a round cape. (Neubecker p.18)
5. Freelance heralds conducting a review of helmets as part of the tournament. The arms of the participants are on small shields on the helmets. Note the short capelets with two rows of shields worn by the heralds. (Neubecker p.160, Konrad Grünenberg's Armorial 1483).
6. "Early 17th c. painting of officer about to be created Garter King of Arms, surrounded by heralds holding the objects to be used in the ceremony (his Patent, the book on which he is to swear his oath, his robe as an officer of the Order of the Garter, his crown, a cup of wine for baptizing him, etc.) (Coll. Arms, Vincent 151, fo. 30v)" Also present appear to be Garter's white rod with the flag at the end, and what possibly might be a seal. Woodcock and Robinson plate 26.