

A Guide for Field Herald's
By
Lady Ayslynn merch Guincatan, P.E.

Foreward from the Weel Pursuivant

This is the first publication of Lady Ayslynn's A Guide for Field Herald's, edited by myself and published under authority of the office of the Weel Pursuivant of the Outlands, with permission from the White Stag Principal Herald. This short treatise is an excellent introduction to and discussion of the job of the field herald, as well as helpful with regards to perfecting that art. Except for minor editing done by myself, the text is entirely the work of Lady Ayslynn merch Guincatan. Many thanks to Lady Ayslynn for authoring and allowing us to publish this fine paper.

For more information concerning this and other heraldic documents, please contact:

Lord Timothy O'Brien, CGD
Weel Pursuivant of the Kingdom of the Outlands
c/o Tim Buxton
147 Farnham Point #206
Colorado Springs, CO 80904
tim@hemi.com

I. Introduction

Long before heralds became concerned with the recording of lineage and arms, they were an integral part of the military, political and social life of the Middle Ages. Herald's were messengers, negotiators, marshals, and even spies for their monarchs. As the Voice of the Crown, a herald rode out before a battle to offer terms from his Crown to the opposing forces, all the while observing as much as possible about the enemy should the terms prove unacceptable. Commanders were assigned herald's to provide efficient and reliable communications amongst the army. Socially, herald's organized and conducted the tourneys, sponsored by the nobility, that were so important to the knights of the medieval world.

From this great heritage comes the field heraldry we practice in the Society for Creative Anachronism.

II. Projection

To be a good field herald the primary requirement is the ability to be heard, understood, and maintain your voice over long periods of heralding. To accomplish this you need to be able to project the way actors and singers do.

The first element for good projections is posture. Standing straight, with your stomach in and head up allows your diaphragm to do most of the work. The diaphragm is composed of a wall of muscles under your lungs. Practice, as with any other muscle group, tones

the muscles. The only way to avoid abusing your larynx is to use the diaphragm to push air from the bottom of your lungs up. This has the additional advantage of creating a resonating chamber which helps your voice carry. The air flow through your vocal folds (long, narrow, rounded flaps of tissue in your larynx commonly but inaccurately called vocal cords) is what gives vocalization to your words. For a herald, breath control is very important to master.

Another aspect of projection is timbre or pitch. Timbre is created by the vocal folds. The rate of vibration of the folds is what causes different sounds and pitches. Shouting causes these muscles to tighten and strain. It is important while heralding to keep your voice in its normal range, using the regulation of air to produce the volume. Varying your pitch too much can seriously damage your voice. While it is true that lower timbres have more carrying power, individuals with higher pitched voices should not strain themselves to attain the lower tones. Difficulty in maintaining your normal pitch while projecting is a sure sign your vocal folds are getting tired.

Other things can affect your projection. The main culprits are restrictive clothing and environmental conditions. It is very important that you are able to expand your diaphragm and lungs. Snug Elizabethan tunics or tight Tudor bodices may look smashing on the field, but the confinement of your body restricts your air flow, resulting in a less-than-carrying voice.

Most field heralding is done outside. This means you have to deal with wind and terrain. If you try to stand on high ground and tilt your head a little higher, your voice will carry farther around you. Usually, you should direct your announcements to the largest group of people (avoiding turning your back on the Crown). If there is wind, keep it to your back and use it to carry your words.

III. Articulation

A very important part of projection is articulation, the ability to pronounce words with clarity, intelligibility, and distinctiveness. It doesn't do any good to have a herald who can't be understood. There seems to be two basic approaches to articulation in the SCA, which I call Precision and Rhythmic Chant.

Rhythmic Chanting is a system used to create a melodic flow of words. The herald practically sings the announcements, rolling words together for musical effect. Such heralding is a joy to hear, but frequently difficult to understand.

Precision reflects normal speech patterns, emphasizing clarity of pronunciation and accenting stressed syllables. This technique requires that you speak more slowly, making it easier for your audience to understand.

IV. Pronunciation

Heralds have to be precise in their pronunciation. It is difficult to understand slurrings such as “Amorinaspectaquarta nine.” Your audience needs to hear, “Armor inspection at a quarter to nine.”

As a field herald you will be called upon to pronounce names from a variety of linguistic origins. It is impossible for one herald to know all the different language patterns from which the members derive their personas. For that reason, the simplest way to avoid mispronouncing a fighter’s name is to ask him or her to say it a couple of times for you. A classic example of needing guidance on pronouncing a name comes with the many Arabic and Welsh names we have in the Outlands. Try pronouncing:

Asidu Haroun ibn al-Dhi’b al-Abyadh

Even if the fighter says it for you, it’s a hard one to remember.

In tourneys you are given cards for the order of matches with each fighter’s name. Ask the minister of the lists if you may write the phonetic spelling of each name to help you pronounce it correctly. The above example becomes:

Ah-see-dew HaRoon Eeben Ahl-Die-Eeb Ahl-Ah-bee-yawd

This is my personal phonetic spelling and from it I can come reasonably close to the correct pronunciation. Work out a system that helps you.

A herald should always try to pronounce names correctly; but if you do make a mistake, don’t get upset. Everyone makes them. Apologize to the fighter but don’t slow down the tourney to do it. It may be better to do so after the match when you are both off the field. If a fighter becomes difficult because you mispronounced his name, simply politely refer him to the King. Heralds, both historically and in Our Medieval Tymes, cannot be challenged while performing their duties. We’ll talk more about this under Etiquette and Protocol.

V. A Field Herald’s Paraphernalia

Traditionally, heralds were made distinctive by the tabards they wore. In the SCA, heralds wear the insignia of crossed gold trumpets. It is particularly important for field heralds to wear some kind of distinguishing garb to make them highly visible on the field. Another useful piece of regalia is a staff. This can be pounded to get attention and lends dignity to the herald. However, they can get in the way when you are juggling a set of index cards on the tourney field. Whenever you are performing the duties of a herald, but especially during formal tournaments and other occasions of “high estate,” you should wear your regalia. Here are a few suggestions for comfortable and durable attire.

The easiest to make is the baldric. This is a green sash worn from the left shoulder to the right hip with crossed gold trumpets on the front. These can be made out of velvet or

satin if you wish, but I would suggest broadcloth or trigger. A field herald's garb gets a lot of wear and it's helpful to be able to wash it.

A common and simple type of regalia is the tabard. This is simply two yards of green cloth, approximately shoulder width, with the crossed trumpets on the front and back. In many areas, heralds add the device of their kingdom as well, but be certain you don't accidentally adopt the heraldic symbols designating heraldic rank. If you are unsure check with your local pursuivant. The wearing of the kingdom Ensign (Vert, a stag salient armed and unguled within a bordure embattled Or) is usually safe. Remember, anybody may wear a baldric; you must attain the rank of Pursuivant Extraordinary to bear a tabard.

The staff is approximately five feet high and can be made from a two-inch dowel or any other stick that would work for a walking stick. Decorating it with ribbons, a painted design, and even bells adds to the overall effect.

Frequently ministers of the lists find themselves short of index cards, pens, pencils, etc. If you carry a few with you it can help avoid a last-minute panic.

Keep your baldric or tabard, cards, and writing implements in a satchel. That way you won't have to scrounge around for them.

VI. The Role of the Field Herald

Field heralds are called upon to do a wide variety of activities that help make an event colorful and smooth-running. Most of these activities can be grouped into three areas: announcing, processions, and tourneys.

Announcing includes Camp Crying. This involves making proclamations for the Crown, the autocrat, or some other official of an event, as well as making the dreaded Morning Wake Up Call. Basic announcements should be made clearly and repeated in several locations around the camp.

Many heralds abhor Camp Crying, but there are ways to make it less tedious. First, know the camp and identify specific spots that will reach the people in the area. If more than one herald is participating, you can divvy up camp sections. Have one herald start with:

“Oyeh, Oyeh, Oyeh, Pray attend an important announcement from the autocrat.”

Then the second herald repeats that, followed by the third, and so on. When all have repeated the line, you move on to the next.

“All dragons must be removed from the campsite by six o'clock.”

Again, all the other heralds repeat it in turn.

Or you can make Camp Crying a group effort. Two or more heralds make the rounds and turn the announcement into entertainment. For example:

Herald Tristan: "Oyeh, Lords and Ladies Faire."

Herald Brunhilde: "Heed our call and don't despair."

Herald Clyde: "In one hour bring your cards blue and green."

Herald Tristan: "For the List Mistress to be seen."

Herald Brunhilde: "If in the tourney you wish to compete."

It may be bad poetry, but it gets the populace's attention. However Camp Crying is done, it is important that the details of the announcements are clear.

The Morning Wake Up Call is one of those necessary evils that help make an event run smoothly. The main difference between this and normal Camp Crying is that people are asleep when you begin. A herald doing the Wake Up Call should be courageous and have quick reflexes. It helps to be organized. Check with the autocrat for what needs to be included in the morning announcements and what time the call should be made. The actual call needs to be done slowly, clearly, and in as simply and logical a manner as possible. Here's a sample presentation:

"Good Gentles, the morning lark announces the day. The time is eight a.m. and this is your wake up call. The autocrat requests that all vehicles be removed to the parking area. Armor inspection will begin at nine o'clock in front of the Earl Marshal's tent. That is the large black Viking tent facing the meadow. Morning court will be held at ten-thirty in front of Their Majesties' Pavilion. Thus end the morning announcements."

It is important to state time and place to avoid confusion. After making the announcement, be prepared to duck. Boot throwing is one of the dangers the Wake Up herald faces.

Another aspect of announcing is advertising. Historically, heralds were hired to cry the praises of knights, thus adding to the fighter's fame. In our Modern Middle Ages, heralds make advertising announcements. A sharp herald will bargain with whomever wishes him or her to make a commercial announcement. Keep payment in the spirit of the game and barter. For example, if the tavern wants you to advertise their lunch menu, agree that they'll provide you with a free lunch. Of course, the quality of the advertising is directly effected by the quality of the payment.

VII. Processionals

It is not uncommon for field heralds to be called upon to participate in processionals, usually at the more formal tourneys such as Crown. You may find yourself suddenly being asked to act for one of the participants, announcing his or her name, awards, and blazoning, as well as that of a consort. Frequently, because of a shortage, of heralds, you may present to the Crown three or four different contestants. This is one of the times you should be at your most dignified and prepared.

Here's where those index cards come in handy again. Get with whomever has asked you to herald for them and write down the following information.

Fighter's Name and Title: spell it phonetically if necessary.

Awards: Remember, most peerages begin with Companion of (the Laurel, the Pelican). A knight is given as Knight of the Society. For the correct terminology refer to your pursuivants.

Blazoning: This is the written description of his/her device. Brush up on your heraldic terminology because you may find you have to blazon the device yourself.

Then say, "Bearing the Favor of," of some equivalent transitional phrase, "his/her consort, _____."

Awards of the Consort:

Blazoning of Consort's Device:

Please, as one herald did, don't say "Award _____." Just go list the awards. For the blazoning the correct term is "bearing the arms" (if an AoA has been given) or "bearing the device" (if it has not).

Always wait until the group ahead of you has completed their turn and made their bows to the Crown before beginning your heralding. Remember, it is your job to make your patron sound important through your posture, voice, pace, and general presence.

VIII. Tournaments

When people think of field heralds they most commonly think of those individuals out in the middle of the tournament field announcing the matches and victories. This is where all your training comes into play. On the tourney field you are the Voice of the Crown and should behave accordingly.

Tourneys can be ranked by the level of formality, with a Crown Tournament requiring the most attention to etiquette and protocol. It is the responsibility of the herald to set the tone and pace of a tournament.

IX. Etiquette and Protocol on the Tourney Field

Field heralds should be familiar with the rules of combat. While it is no longer necessary in the Outlands for field heralds to have combat-related activities cards, taking a marshaling class is strongly encouraged. Basically, as a field herald, you should observe the following rules:

1. The marshal is in charge of the field.

2. Be on the field only to call the round, introduce the match and salutes, and to announce the winner. Otherwise you should position yourself just off the field.
3. Pay attention to what is happening on the field.
4. Wait for the marshal to indicate the victor before announcing it.
5. When standing off the field, do not block the MOL's view.
6. Never, ever react to anything that happens in the course of combat. It is inappropriate for a herald to call a point of chivalry or to cheer one fighter.
7. It is also inappropriate for a herald to discuss or make judgmental comments from the sideline to those nearby, even in conversation.
8. Be prepared to call for a chiurgeon should the need arise. It helps if you know where the closest one is.
9. Never make your announcement while another herald is speaking. Wait until he/she is finished, then begin yours. Frequently in Crown Tournaments there will be more than one fighting field and several heralds, so be polite.

There is a basic litany that the field heralds follow. The scenario for a formal tournament runs as follows:

The herald introduces him/herself to the MOL and receives a set of cards grouped by matches for the round. The MOL may ask you to mark the winner and loser of each match on the cards. At the beginning of a round you call the fighters to the center of the field.

For example:

“Oyeh, Oyeh, Good Gentles pray attend. The matches for the first round of the Lady's Heart Tournament are as follows: First match, Sir Abelard meets The Honorable Lady Heloise. Second Match: Lord Gryphon meets Lord Lyon.”

Continue until all the matches are announced. Then say, “This round will be fought sword and shield (or whatever weapons form has been determined).”

Let the fighters clear the field. Check with the marshal and see if he/she wants full salutes or the abbreviated form. If there are several competitors, the shortened forms of salutes may be used until the last rounds. Ask the marshal if he/she is ready for the fighters to be called. Then say:

“To the field please, Sir Abelard and The Honorable Lady Heloise. Arm yourselves, please, Lord Gryphon and Lord Lyon. Sir Calvin and Sir Hobbs, prepare.” If possible, aim the announcement towards the individuals whose names you are calling.

When the two fighters position themselves on the field, you say:

“In this match Sir Abelard (indicate the fighter) doth meet The Honorable Lady Heloise (indicate fighter). Good fighters (or gentlemen, if both are male), please salute the Crown.” Always introduce the fighter of higher rank first.

“Please salute the one for whom you fight this day (or whose favor you bear).

“Please salute your worthy opponent.

“Pray heed the marshal (or, at the marshal’s command, or My Lord Marshal the field is yours).

Then get off the field!

Abbreviated salutes simply consist of the phrase, “Please make your appropriate salutes.”

When the match is over, wait for the marshal to indicate the winner. Then return to the field and say:

“Victory to ____” or “Sir _____ victorious.” Indicate on the cards whether they won or lost and return the two cards to the MOL.

X. To Pun or Not to Pun, and Other Commonly Asked Questions

The more formal a tournament, the more dignified your bearing should be. There is a place for more casual heralding where an informal air is desired. Demonstrations for mundanes is the one place the herald needs to interact with the audience more. “Silly” tournaments are another place a herald can indulge in his/her more quixotic side. But there are still a few concepts to which you need to adhere.

If you pun, keep it relatively clean. Innuendo is a subtle art. Never make a pun that is truly hurtful or in such bad taste that your audience blushes instead of laughs. Punning does not belong in a formal tournament. The intensity of the fighters on the field makes their senses of humor and tolerance for heralds who waste fighting time with words pretty low.

Creating nicknames for fighters can add to the humor of a “nonsense” tourney. These tournaments are held just for the sheer nuttiness of them and the more you add to the jester atmosphere, the better. But again, make certain the nicknames you give add to the fun and do not hurt the self-image of the fighter.

Glib jokes are usually welcome at the less formal tournaments as long as it doesn’t slow down the pace. Some of us aren’t as glib as others and may choose to leave this to the swifter of tongue.

A final word on infusing humor where appropriate in announcing, tournaments, and demonstrations: there are certain films which are ingrained in the SCA culture. I refer to, of course, such epic films as Monty Python’s Search for the Holy Grail (or any other Monty Python movie, for that matter), The Princess Bride, and Robin Hood: Men in Tights. A new herald needs to be familiar with these classics so they, too, can swing into

such stock heraldic routines as, “He’s only a little dead,” “What do we do with witches?” and “Have fun storming the castle.”

Field heralding is a lot of fun and it fills an important aspect of our quest to add to the atmosphere of our game. The information presented here is only a guideline. Talk with other heralds and learn what has worked for them. The go out and project!

Exercises for Projection:

1. Take a deep breath, pulling in your stomach to lift the diaphragm. Slowly let it out until you feel you have no air left in your lungs, still keeping your stomach tight. Repeat. Now, do the same thing and say “oh,” holding it as long as you can. Repeat using “ah,” and then with “me.” If you rest your fingers just under your ribcage you can feel your diaphragm muscles working. If you don’t, you’re doing it wrong.
2. Have someone stand two feet from you and speak in a normal voice. Then ask that person to step ten feet from you and project the same announcement to him. Next, ask him to move back forty feet and project the announcement to him there. This teaches control and helps you develop pronunciation skills as well.
3. Lie on your back. Pull in your stomach muscles and lift your diaphragm. Place a small glass of water on your stomach. Let your breath out slowly so as not to spill the water.

Exercises for Pronunciation

1. To pronounce words clearly and correctly it is necessary to warm up the face and throat muscles. Purse your lips hard, then quickly pull them back into a tight-lipped grimace. Repeat several times. You will feel a slight tingling in your lips.
2. Open your mouth as wide as you can, as if you are yawning, then bring your lips together as you thrust your jaw forward. Repeat three times. Then move your lower jaw from left to right several times. Be careful not to move too far to the side as you can strain the muscles and ligaments.
3. Using good posture, breathe properly and vocalize the following sequence. These are all throat sounds and will help warm up those muscles. “Oh, oh, oh,” then “ah, ah, ah,” then “eee, eee, eee,” and finally “ai, ai, ai.”
4. For front-of-the-mouth sounds, repeat the above exercise using “da, da, da,” and “la, la, la,” then “ta, ta, ta,” “ma, ma, ma,” then “pa, pa, pa,” “fa, fa, fa,” and finally, “ra, ra, ra.”